

Why blacks
aren't
greens

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Romanians search for way to build democracy in an undemocratic land

By Paul Hockenos

BUCHAREST, ROMANIA

This is the first in a two-part series on Romania.

Dwarfed by the Stalinist apartment blocks of Unirii Square, flowers and orthodox icons adorn the memorials to the December revolution's martyrs. During the Easter celebrations, church-goers from the nearby basilica intermingle with the masses of protesters that congregate for daily demonstrations against the reform Communist government.

In Romania, traditions old and new converge in the political turmoil that has escalated steadily since the bloodbath of late December, when dictator Nicolae Ceausescu was overthrown and then executed. Currently, the diverse opposition, united in their effort to dislodge the ruling Front for National Salvation (FNS), encompasses a strong democratic movement, as well as a formidable array of reactionary elements. Two weeks before parliamentary elections here, the perseverance of the dictatorship's old structure darkens the prospects of a fair and peaceful transition to Western-style democracy.

The spectrum of forces vying for power—from the Securitate, which was Ceausescu's paramilitary force, to the Orthodox Church, from ultranationalists to the Ceausescu nomenclatura—indicates the daunting task ahead for the democratic movement here. The balance of these powers, for the time being at least, teeters in the Front, itself wracked by divisions, and the revived historical parties that will compete in the May 20 vote. The short post-revolutionary history of the major electoral forces, however, has already betrayed the legacy of their tainted pasts.

The Front's connection to the former Ceausescu regime, in spirit and substance, is the focus of popular discontent. Mass demonstrations, often violent, have destabilized the "interim" government and further entrenched it in the authoritarian *modus operandi* of its predecessor in the military. The bureaucracy, the security apparatus and the church, the structures that maintained the dictatorship for 25 years, remain in place behind the front's pluralistic facade.

On the corrugated iron fences that mark off the city's ubiquitous building sites, nearly all at a standstill, bright red graffiti blasts the Front's two leaders, Prime Minister Petre Roman and President Ion Iliescu. "Down with Communism! Down with the Front!" is splattered from one end of Bucharest to the other.

"In those days and weeks after the revolution, Iliescu and Roman were the hopes of the nation," says Radica Zabara, a journalist with the independent daily *Romania Liberé*. "We trusted them. But now we don't have any such illusions."

Iliescu, a high-ranking party member until his fall from grace in the late '70s, is by no means the equivalent of the former dictator. A friend of Mikhail Gorbachov from their university days in Moscow, the reformer stands in the tradition of the Soviet leader. Yet in Romania, as throughout Eastern Europe, the public has little patience with anything that resembles the repressive Communist systems of the past.

More of the same: Since Ceausescu's downfall the Front has moved steadily away from the democratic ideals that it had espoused. Time and again, the Stalinist logic of the old regime surfaces in its actions. In mid-April, the Front shut down the international press center in Bucharest. Although no explanation was given, the motive was clear: after months of unfavorable coverage, the Western press was to watch its step as the election date draws near.

The government itself dominates the media in Romania. Under its control, television and radio provide the Front with non-stop coverage. Outside the heavily guarded chain-link fence of the national broadcasting network, demonstrators shout, "Return the television to the people!" along with the usual litany of anti-communist chants.

Newspapers provide the opposition with more latitude, as dozens of independent and party publications have sprung up. In the dark subway passages and from within crumbling doorways, Gypsy boys hawk the dailies for the price of one lei, or one American cent. While the quality of even the best independent is inconsistent, the Front's daily, *Adeverul* (*The Truth*), reads conspicuously like a mild version of the dictator's old propaganda.

The Front's recent decision to block the visit of exiled monarch King Michael sparked a rash of demonstrations. The king, who refuses to acknowledge the validity of his forced abdication in 1947, intended to visit the country in April. Now living in Switzerland, the monarch considers himself the legitimate "head of state of Romania."

According to polls, the vast majority of Romanians oppose the restoration of the monarchy. The leading political parties recommended that the king postpone his trip until after the election and have called for a referendum on the issue later this year.

In the non-electoral democratic opposition, the spirit of the revolution has rallied itself around the Proclamation of Timisoara. The two-page document, formulated in the city that initiated the uprising, calls for the democratization of society at every level, a full purge of the Securitate and nomenclatura from official positions and a constructive program to facilitate reconciliation between the nationalities. The recent proclamation has been endorsed by student, ecological, intellectual and other grass-roots democratic organizations across the country.

The movement's origin in Timisoara is significant. In name and practice, the now-famous city embodies the democratic ideals of the revolution's younger generations, which have suffered a beating in Transylvania and Bucharest. In Timisoara, despite a large minority population, the nationalities live in relative harmony, democratic structures remain in place from December and nearly all of the apparatchiks have been ousted from high positions.

"The proclamation and the people behind it carry on these traditions," explains Herbert Grunwald, editor of the literary and political journal *Neue Literatur*. "It has no real leaders or organization but is more of a consciousness, a movement. It is here that the seeds of democracy lie."

The movement's supporters are staunchly anti-Communist, oriented toward the West and European models of bourgeois democracy. In contrast to many of the forces active in Romanian politics, it is centrist, secular and

firmly in the tradition of Western liberalism. Its young and middle-aged adherents are the same ones who launched the uprising against Ceausescu, while the leaders of the political parties watched the events on their TV sets.

Democracy's last hope? During the campaign, the activists have set their sights on Article 8 of the election regulations, which prohibits former Securitate and ex-Communist Party careerists from contesting the elections. Dissidents such as Iliescu would be exempt from the ban. In anoraks and boots, students watch over petition tables in the cool spring drizzle, collecting thousands of signatures for the article's strict enforcement.

"People are extremely frustrated by the fact that the bureaucracy and the Secus [Securitate members] live on in the government," says Grunwald, one of the few ethnic Germans who intend to stay in Romania rather than emigrate to the Federal Republic. The critic, an FNS sympathizer until February, withdrew his support when the "lies, propaganda and compromises became too much." Now, he adds, the Timisoara movement is the "only real alternative to push for democratic change."

In the country's critical power bases, the spirit of Timisoara has both allies and formidable opponents. The military, divided in the first days of the uprising, now appears split even further.

At a heavy price, the Front seems to have brought the top brass behind it, keeping the strong right-nationalist elements in the armed forces at a distance. The army has intervened reliably at recent demonstrations on the Front's behalf. The rows of tanks and armed guards poised outside the National Council building, which came under attack more than once this winter, attest to the

INSIDE STORY

FNS' fragile position.

Factions of the army's rank and file have asserted themselves against the status quo. Two upstart groups—the Initiative for the Democratization of the Romanian Army and the Committee for the Defense of the Romanian Army's Rights—have consolidated the movement, which has already forced open a dialogue within the military and wrenched significant concessions from its superiors.

The soldiers' abysmal living conditions have been improved, leave time extended and the mandatory conscription period cut from nine to six months. In February, protests led to the sacking of the defense minister and several cronies implicated in the old security apparatus.

The Eastern Orthodox Church, long a conservative and potent force in Romanian society, is equally fragmented within, and its commitment to democracy of any kind is questionable. The church hierarchy, which had been closely aligned with the Ceausescu regime, as well as the fascist government before it, has shifted most of its support to the FNS. The power that it wields in rural communities, where newspapers and televisions are rare, is key to the Front's longevity.

After decades of suppression, a populist lay movement has re-emerged to challenge those powers. In *Romania Liberé*, whole sections have been devoted to "rebuilding the unity of church and people." Yet the moral ethic that this movement embraces, and the nationalist forces that sup-semi-fascist organization Vatra Romanesca—bodes ill for a meaningful break with the clergy's reactionary tradition.

The political vacuum in Romania provides the broad assortment of extremists here with considerable room to maneuver. Yet, in light of the country's violent history, limited pluralism, press freedom and open political organizing are radical steps toward some form of democracy.

Paid for in blood and carried on in the spirit of Timisoara, those advances may be under attack but they will not be passively relinquished.

Paul Hockenos is *In These Times'* correspondent in Eastern Europe.

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By Daniel Lazare

NEW YORK

UNDER FORMER MAYOR ED KOCH, NEW York City moved slowly to catch up with the ferocious AIDS epidemic sweeping through the black and Hispanic underclass. But under Mayor David Dinkins, the pace has changed. Now New York is pedaling furiously—in reverse.

Upon taking office, Dinkins vowed not to let up on the war on drugs, which is doing more to disrupt medical services in places like Harlem and the South Bronx than it is to improve them. Dinkins also reneged on a campaign promise to build small-scale hospices for homeless people with AIDS rather than herd them into large barrack-style shelters where they would be exposed to a wide range of infections. In mid-February, the mayor closed down a pioneer program that distributed clean hypodermics to heroin addicts to prevent the sharing of dirty needles, a prime contributor to the spread of AIDS.

Dinkins' new health commissioner, Woodrow Myers, gave a press conference April 9 in which he not only condemned clean-needle programs but also criticized grass-roots efforts to teach addicts to sterilize their "works" using ordinary household bleach. Myers said he was "ideologically opposed" to such programs and unconvinced they are "cost-effective." But when one reporter asked if there was anything that might change his mind, Myers said "no."

His response sent shock waves through the ranks of AIDS-care advocates. Not only does New York have the largest number of gay men infected with the AIDS virus nationwide—the city health department says up to 76,000 cases; gay AIDS care advocates say far more—it also has the largest number of infected people in and around the city's vast drug-shooting culture. According to the Centers for Disease Control, Washington, D.C., has 602 known cases of drug-related AIDS, Philadelphia has 709 and greater metropolitan Miami has 1,772.

By contrast, the New York-New Jersey metropolitan area has nearly 15,000 drug-related AIDS patients—40 percent of the U.S. total—plus another 140,000 who contracted the virus from dirty needles but have not developed the full-blown disease. These cases include not only heroin addicts who have gotten HIV by sharing dirty needles but also those who contracted it from sexual contact with a junkie or, in the case of up to 4,400 children, those who were born to HIV-infected mothers. Although the dimensions of the AIDS epidemic have been apparent since 1984, outreach programs and community services are minimal and drug treatment centers are so overloaded that addicts who have not yet contracted the disease face a six-month wait. While the plight of gay men with AIDS is undeniably poignant, it is fair to say that AIDS-infected middle-class gays and AIDS-infected junkies inhabit very different worlds: one of private doctors and support groups, the other of homelessness, overcrowded hospital emergency rooms and jail cells.

Darkness at the end of the tunnel: Indications are growing that the disease, thanks to years of neglect, has gained a foothold among the burgeoning number of prostitutes who don't shoot heroin but who trade sex for crack—sometimes the equivalent of just \$2 to \$3 a pop. Since an estimated



New York and AIDS: the politics of disease

200,000 to 300,000 New Yorkers, many of them women, smoke crack, drug experts like Don Des Jarlais, a psychologist at Beth Israel Hospital, are warning that yet another front in the epidemic is opening up.

Rather than designing a scientific program to reduce needle use, today's holy warriors have set their sights on the impossible goal of eliminating drugs altogether.

Rather than responding to the crisis—even in the face of the city's deepening fiscal crisis—the Dinkins administration has opted for policies seemingly designed to make it worse. This has enraged AIDS-care advocates who excoriated Koch during last year's mayoral election but have since come to the astonishing conclusion that Dinkins, whom they overwhelmingly supported, is in crucial respects far worse.

"It's quite clear that Koch had a better understanding of this specific problem than Dinkins does," says Alan Beck, a spokesman for the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT-UP). "He's taken a much less compassionate stance, as far as we're concerned," adds Beck. "Koch didn't speak much about his ideological beliefs [concerning drugs]," says Vincent Gagliostro, another ACT-UP leader, "but from Dinkins and Myers we're getting a lot of that. We're talking reality, but they're talking ideology and beliefs."

Lest this historical reappraisal go too far, it should be remembered that Koch reacted with glacial slowness to the first signs of AIDS in the early '80s, defunded neighborhoods like Harlem and the South Bronx where AIDS is essentially a byproduct of urban devastation and was absolutely nonpareil when it came to general bonkerism

on the subject of drugs. He once suggested strip-searching every traveler who crossed the U.S.-Mexican border and using F-14 fighters to force down Piper Cubs suspected of carrying drugs. Yet as early as 1985, the former mayor floated a proposal for a massive clean-needles program in response to the growing epidemic among junkies. After he was shouted down by black Democrats and white liberals like former City Council President Carol Bellamy (rumored to be making a comeback), Koch and his health commissioner, Stephen Joseph, fought for and won a scaled-down version three years later.

Dinkins, however, has opted to enforce know-nothing policies that couldn't be more harmful if city health officers strapped down junkies and shot them with the AIDS virus themselves. In addition to making clean syringes more expensive and difficult to obtain, criminalizing them encourages junkies to rent dirty ones from their dealers rather than risk arrest by venturing out into the streets with a clean needle. And discouraging needle-bleaching programs sends a clear, unmistakable message that the city doesn't care what happens to junkies as long as they insist on shooting up. This, in turn, encourages junkies not to give a damn about those they might infect through unsafe sex.

City Hall is pleading what might be called the "no mixed message" defense, arguing that the only way for drug addicts to prevent AIDS is to go cold turkey. "I don't want to teach them to bleach the needles," then-candidate Dinkins told this reporter last May. "I want to teach them not to use the damn things." This is the same hard line advanced by drug czar William Bennett, House narcotics committee Chairman Charles Rangel (D-NY)—a close friend of Dinkins—and countless clergymen, educators and wardheelers in Rangel's Harlem home turf.

Biting the electorate's hand: Dinkins, who is black, was elected with overwhelming white-liberal and gay support. Yet his harsh views on AIDS treatment and prevention are liable to prove devastating to the predominantly black and Latino underclass. Middle-class blacks are responding to the drug problem in much the same way "lace curtain" Irish responded to the liquor problem around the turn of the century—with stern, unrelenting moralism. In the mid-'60s, politicians and church leaders in Harlem were instrumental in convincing former Gov. Nelson Rockefeller to adopt what were billed as the toughest drug laws in the world—laws that served only to overload the courts, needlessly imprison thousands of people and escalate the war between dealers and cops. More recently, Rev. Calvin Butts of the Abyssinian Baptist Church, where Adam Clayton Powell once ministered, has demonstrated, by whitewashing Harlem cigarette and alcohol ads targeted at blacks, that the ideals of the 19th-century temperance movement are still alive.

But such crusades are only a substitute for rational thought. Rather than designing a scientific program to reduce needle use, today's holy warriors have set their sights on the impossible goal of eliminating drugs altogether. Even if the relevant indicators like AIDS, crack and black-market violence point down, the battle is still moot.

The modern motherland: Health authorities in Liverpool, England, however, are

Continued on page 11

By Joel Bleifuss

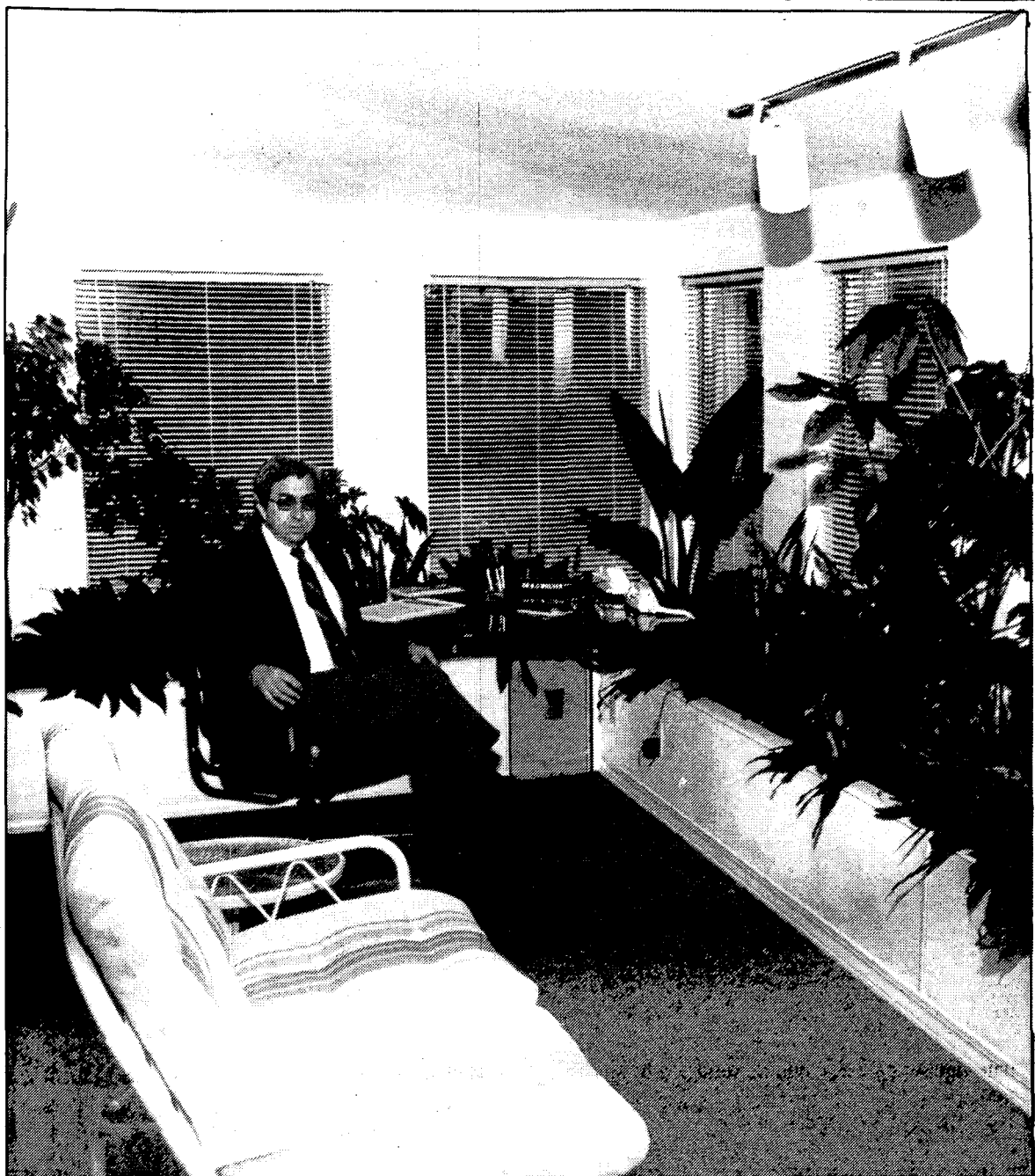
Loan Star state

Evidence continues to mount that the CIA was involved in the failure of a number of savings and loans (S&Ls). (See "In Short," February 21 and 28, March 14 and "The First Stone," April 25.) One publication that is following the CIA-S&L connection is *Money Laundering Alert*, a Miami-based monthly newsletter directed to an audience of bankers, accountants, federal regulators and law-enforcement officials. Its publisher is Miami lawyer Charles Intrigo, a former federal prosecutor who 20 years ago was the chief counsel to the House government operations subcommittee that oversaw the Justice and Treasury departments and all federal banking agencies. In the April issue, Anthony Kimery reports, "According to well-connected intelligence-community sources who talked to *Money Laundering Alert*, significant amounts of money obtained through fraudulent means from a number of the nation's failed S&Ls were laundered through the accounts of CIA front companies. One source, a former senior CIA official working in Washington, said categorically that the failed S&Ls in Texas had had their assets illegally siphoned off by the CIA to fund unauthorized covert operations. He referred to those CIA operatives as 'cowboys who didn't know what the hell they were doing.'" Kimery told *In These Times* that the cowboys his source was referring to were CIA renegades whom former CIA Director Stansfield Turner had purged in the late '70s and whom the late former CIA Director William Casey used to carry out covert operations that the Reagan administration did not want to be held accountable for. Kimery says that, according to his source, these "cowboys" operated with direct CIA authority.

Funding covert operations?

Pete Brewton's ongoing *Houston Post* expose on CIA and organized-crime involvement in the failure of 25 federally insured financial institutions has recently examined Vision Banc Savings in Kingsville, Tx., and Hill Financial Savings in Red Hill, Pa. Brewton reports that a major factor in the failure of both was the loss of about \$57 million loaned for a \$200 million, 2,000-acre land deal in Florida. That deal was originally arranged by Lawrence Freeman, a convicted money launderer and a close associate of the late Paul Helliwell, a founding member of the CIA. Helliwell was involved in numerous CIA covert operations, including attempts to overthrow Fidel Castro. In the '70s, Freeman worked with Helliwell and his Bahama-based Castle Bank and Trust. According to the late Penny Lernoux in her 1984 book *In Banks We Trust*, the offshore Castle Bank and Trust was used by the CIA and the Mafia to launder money. Freeman first met Helliwell in April 1969 in Miami. According to Freeman, soon thereafter he and Helliwell met again at a dinner in Zurich, Switzerland, with the late CIA Director Casey, another founding member of the CIA. A source close to the federal investigation of S&L failures told Brewton that some of the money that Vision Banc Savings and Hill Financial Savings lost in Freeman's land deal may have been diverted for use in CIA-sponsored covert operations.

Wash and cash: Unlike a straightforward political scandal, understanding the CIA-S&L connection requires following a complicated trail of "daisy chain" lending that involved loans within loans upon other loans—loans S&L investigators refer to as "time bombs." Take the example of Vision Banc Savings, which loaned \$20 million to finance Freeman's Florida land deal and lost \$17 million in the process. Vision Banc was owned by Robert L. Corson, a Houston developer. According to S&L regulators, this loan to Freeman led to Vision Banc's failure—four months after Corson had bought it. (The cost to taxpayers for bailing out Vision Banc is estimated at \$50 million.) Federal law-enforcement records refer to Corson as a "known money launderer." And Portland-based arms dealer Richard Brenneke told the *Houston Post* that Corson often worked for the CIA as "a mule"—a person who transports large sums of money from one country to another. Of the \$20 million Corson's Vision Banc lent Freeman, \$7 million was wired to a trust in the Isle of Jersey, a British tax haven in the English Channel. One officer of that trust, Raymond Harvey, had previously helped Freeman launder drug money, a crime for which Freeman was eventually convicted. Harvey's trust in the Isle of Jersey also handled money that originated from Lamar Savings in Austin and Continental Savings in Houston. These two failed S&Ls, Corson's Vision Banc and four other failed Texas thrifts had loaned more than \$100 million to Houston developer Mike Adkins to help him purchase a Houston shopping center that was later found to be worth about \$30 million. The *Houston Post* reports that Adkins, a friend and business associate of Corson, is also an international arms dealer who, in con-



Bill Wolverton sits at his desk while the plants process his family's sewage.

Bill Wolverton: 'man with the weeds'

By William K. Burke

When he's not traveling around the U.S. and Europe, environmental scientist Bill Wolverton likes to fish in the pond beside his house in Picayune, Miss. While waiting for the catfish or bass to bite, he can look out on one of his strangest achievements—a sewage-treatment sunroom that wraps around two sides of his house. In that sunroom are the offices of Wolverton Environmental Services. Beneath its evenly spaced windows runs a planter filled with the mottled green spikes of Chinese evergreen, bird of paradise, mother-in-law's tongue and other common houseplants.

Under the plants is a bed of clay pebbles through which flows a solution of partially digested sewage from the bathroom and kitchen. "You can't see it, and you can't smell it," Wolverton says. The sewage-treating sunroom is a triumph of persistence and persuasion. For five years Yvonne Wolverton, Bill's wife, resisted his arguments for building the sunroom onto their house. "At first I was skeptical," she says. "When your husband tells you he's going to pump sewage into the house, into the walls, it worries you." Now the couple share their morning coffee surrounded by their in-house sewage-treatment plant.

Since retiring from the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) last year, Wolverton has become a crusader for the technology that he developed during 16 years of research. "Over the next 40 to 50 years this is going to be our salvation—not just of this country but of the world," he

claims. "It's probably the only technology we can afford that will save planet Earth."

Wolverton is a pioneer in the field of ecological treatment of sewage and industrial waste. He designs what he calls "marsh filters," wetlands and flowerbeds that use plants and bacteria to break down sewage and toxic chemicals. In Wolverton's filters, the bacteria feed on the sewage and organic chemicals, breaking them down to simpler compounds that plants such as reeds, lilies and water hyacinths can use for food.

Municipal sewage is consumed almost completely in the marsh filters, but the toxic heavy metals like lead or cadmium accumulate in the plants, leaving waste-treatment researchers with a secondary environmental problem to solve. Wolverton suggests harvesting the metal-rich plants and burying them in a secure facility, letting them decompose and recycling the metals.

Ecological treatment is a radical yet simple notion that is fast becoming the state of the art in wastewater engineering. Every new artform needs an avant garde that is willing to be called crazy for proposing it. Wolverton is now proud of the title he earned 15 years ago, when he first approached conventional engineers with the notion of growing plants from sewage. With more than 100 of his biological waste-treatment systems operating across the South, he's happy to be known as "the man with the weeds."

The sewage plant in Houghton, La., is a typical Wolverton project. The town's raw sewage flows into an artificial wetland loaded with microbes that

partially digest the organic compounds that would otherwise feed algae and choke lakes and rivers. Thick growths of canna lilies and bulrushes consume the remaining sludge. An ordinary wastewater plant would have a concrete lagoon full of liquid sewage; Wolverton's treatment produces a field of orange flowers. In the plant's first year in operation, Haughton's mayor was able to reduce his constituents' sewer fees by 25 percent.

So why aren't communities across the country rushing to plant sewage lagoons?

"There are still critics," Wolverton says. "You've got to keep in mind that big corporations have billions of dollars invested in big chemical plants. They are just not attuned to this biological process—growing plants to purify the waste. For years they said, 'It's a fad—it will go away.' But it didn't go away, and it's not going to go away. That's why I put a system in my house: seeing is believing."

Wolverton's folly: His background is not as revolutionary as his sewage-treatment process. As a boy growing up in the country town of Sebastopol, Miss., he often whiled away the days fishing. He recalls being fascinated with the rural wisdom that the combined action of plants, water and soil could purify the water in a creek 100 yards downstream from a pollution source. That childhood impression faded as he followed a career path typical of ambitious young men who went off to work under the banner of technology and progress.

After training in microbiology and chemistry, Wolverton did biochemical-warfare research for the Pentagon in the late '60s. While studying Agent Orange's effects on swamps, Wolverton discovered that the herbicide simply disappeared without a trace, although he didn't study what happened to the lethal dioxin that was later shown to contaminate Agent Orange. When he returned to Mississippi to work at NASA's giant space-research station in 1971, he brought with him a renewed respect for the power of plants.

He then convinced his new employers to let him try growing water hyacinths on NASA's sewage lagoons rather than spending millions on a new wastewater-treatment plant. Throughout the southeastern U.S., water hyacinths are viewed as an aquatic weed. Consequently, Wolverton's project immediately pegged him as the research station's resident "mad scientist." "The engineering staff thought I should be put in a mental institution. They said, 'He's going to come in here with a bunch of weeds. This will be an embarrassment to NASA.'"

But since the mid-'70s Wolverton's folly has saved the space agency millions of dollars, and the NASA lagoons have become prototypes for his wastewater marshlands. Today Wolverton is a 57-year-old environmental engineer who writes articles with titles like "Bioaccumulation and Detection of Trace Levels of Cadmium in Aquatic Systems by *Eichhornia Crassipes*," an examination of how to use water hyacinths to monitor the amounts of a toxic heavy metal in polluted water.

Wolverton still has the lab coat and precise demeanor of the people who sold us "better living through chemistry," but now his product is "continued living through biology."

And that is a hard concept to sell in a society used to solving its problems with a quick technological fix. "People say, 'You're crazy—that's too much magic,'" recounts Wolverton. "Some of them are nicer than that. They just look at me and say, 'That's interesting.'" To gain acceptance for his ideas, Wolverton must battle the powers of inertia and capital investment, both of which favor a large-scale mechanical approach to social engineering.

Up against the system: John Johnston, an engineer with Camp, Dresser and McKee, one of the nation's largest civil-engineering firms, points out the greatest obstacle blocking widespread applica-

tion of ecological waste treatment. He calculates that to replace the metropolitan Boston area's newly planned sewage-treatment plant with an artificial wetland would require at least 39 square miles of land. Convincing government officials, taxpayers and federal regulators to commit a six-mile-square tract of land to an experimental technology might defeat even a steadfast ecological missionary like Wolverton.

But Johnston's objection demonstrates society's prejudice against small-scale solutions, not an inherent flaw of ecological waste treatment. Civil engineers and government officials have learned to rely on giant mechanical sewage-treatment plants. Big facilities lessen the Not In My Backyard syndrome's impact because only one angry community must be pressured to accept a treatment facility. Big plants, of course, also bring engineering firms multimillion-dollar contracts.

Millions weren't spent building one of Wolverton's earliest projects—a lily/sewage-treatment field in the center of a Pearlinton, Miss., trailer park. Like Wolverton's sunroom, that field of lilies show how we can transform our waste where we live. Instead of creating concentrated floods of waste, each community could turn its sewage into flowers, animal feed or even weeds. But flushing our problems away with nary a thought has become an American birthright. It is that habit of mind, not economic or environmental logic, that makes eco-waste engineering hard to sell.

Years in the wilderness of disbelief have added vigor to Wolverton's style. Ask him a question and you get a mini-lecture on his work, complete with refutations of the most common doubts about his marsh filters. Yes, they are cheaper to maintain, because, unlike conventional systems, they don't need infusions of toxic chlorine compounds to meet government discharge standards. No, marsh filters don't leave any sludge for towns to dump in the ocean or burn.

Some of Wolverton's other projects include a marsh filter that cleans the waste from four Alabama chemical plants, another marsh filter that allows a catfish farmer to produce 3,000 pounds of fish per pond acre, an experimental process that turns the emissions from burning coal into fertilizer rather than letting them visit us in the form of acid rain and a plan to feed chickens duckweed grown to purify sewage. "It's as good a feed supplement as cornmeal," he says. There's absolutely no end to how one can use plants to clean up waste and the environment at the same time. After all, from the plant's point of view, [the waste] is food."

Once he's got your head spinning with possibilities of a truly green future, Wolverton reminds you of his last, best argument: "The beauty of these processes is that they are both less expensive and a driving force to save the environment."

"That's why I think it will work, and probably the only reason it will work. Environmentalists have been demonstrating for years to save the environment, but as long as it's not been viewed as economical there has been a tremendous amount of resistance. That resistance is breaking down now. Not necessarily because everyone is into saving the environment. No, they are into saving money."

As a boy Wolverton learned the magic a stream could work in 100 yards, but since then we have outgrown nature's ability to absorb our waste. Wolverton is convinced the environment can be saved by transforming society's waste into valuable, or at least beautiful, plants. We've prospered by converting the resources that support life into waste that kills life. Wolverton tells us we must now complete nature's cycle and let life arise again. □

William K. Burke writes regularly on environmental issues for *In These Times*.

junction with a group of Kuwaitis, allegedly sold weapons to Iraq in the early '80s. When Freeman was indicted in November 1985 for money laundering, his role in the Florida land deal was assumed by Adkinson. The *Post* reports that people involved in the deal say they believe that Freeman had been fronting for Adkinson all along.

Silverado pocket lining?

Another failed thrift that Brewton reports had business links to organized-crime figures and CIA operatives is Denver's Silverado Savings. One Silverado board member was President Bush's son Neil. (The taxpayer bill for bailing out Silverado is estimated at \$1 billion.) One bad loan on the Silverado books is the \$14 million lent to California developer Wayne Reeder. According to *Inside Job: The Looting of America's Savings and Loans* by Steve Pizzo, Mary Fricker and Paul Muolo, Reeder is a partner in an Indian bingo parlor with John Nichols, a self-described CIA operative who was involved in assassination attempts against Fidel Castro and Salvador Allende. In the early '80s, Nichols had planned to build a munitions plant on the Cabezón Indian Reservation near Palm Springs, Calif., but never did. Reeder met with contra leaders Raul Arana and Eden Pastora in 1981 at a California shooting range. The contras wanted to buy night-vision goggles and light machine guns from Nichols.

Don't hold your breath

The owner of both a failed Kansas bank and an air-transport company that worked for the CIA avoided prosecution because, in the words of an FBI agent, he had a "get-out-of-jail-free card." Alleged CIA operatives in Texas transferred the proceeds from suspicious S&L loans to offshore banks. The Denver S&L of which Neil Bush was a director made a bad loan to a man who had dealings with the contras. Will anything come of these allegations that the CIA had its hand in the till of failed federally insured financial institutions? The House Select Intelligence Committee, chaired by Rep. Anthony Beilenson, a liberal California Democrat, is looking into the matter. The man charged with leading the investigation is intelligence committee Staff Director Dan Childs, a two-time CIA employee. It remains to be seen whether Beilenson and his committee are up to the job of exposing a scandal that could once again shake the public's faith in its elected leadership. One person who is not optimistic about the success of the investigation is Lloyd Monroe, the former U.S. prosecutor who first raised the allegations reported by the *Houston Post*. Monroe, who for 10 years was a prosecutor with the Justice Department's organized-crime strike force, is currently studying history at Brown University. Brewton reports that Monroe "is convinced the CIA either masterminded or condoned a certain amount of savings and loan fraud." But Monroe says this fraud will be difficult to prove because the appropriate federal agencies "are being precluded from investigating wrongdoing that is possibly [sic] being conducted in the name of national security." He maintains that the investigation broke down because high government officials knew of the alleged CIA involvement and did not want the operation exposed. The CIA denies the charges. Monroe was recently interviewed by the two intelligence-committee staff members in charge of the preliminary investigation.

Bipartisan coverup: Monroe was also interviewed by *In These Times*. And he had this to say about the intelligence committee investigation's chances for success: "If terms of their ability, [the investigators] appear to be top notch, but I have reservations about in what direction they were motivated. They were looking for a smoking gun, and if it wasn't going to be easy they were not going to put a lot of work or put a lot of resources into it. I didn't have a strong sense that anything was going to come of anything I told them—a bureaucratic inertia has set in. To take it a step further, there are probably people in Congress who are not interested in having the S&L tragedy explained to the American people in detail, the reason being that some congressmen have been involved with some of the shady operators of these failed institutions, having received support from them politically and financially. And I am not talking about those congressmen whose names have been paraded before the public in the [investigation of Lincoln Savings in California]. Congress should have taken up the savings and loan bailout issue in 1988, not in 1989. But 1988 was an election year, and when the scandal didn't become a political issue then it should have been a tip to all of us that this virus had infected—through interest groups buying influence with their contributions—both sides of the aisle. There is no conflict between the parties on this scandal. It is quite bipartisan in nature. Democrats and Republicans have a lot to lose in this. So there is a consensus of silence, a consensus of inaction. That is the tragedy—it was an equal-opportunity fraud."

Critically contaminated

The Department of Energy (DOE) has confirmed that an estimated 62 pounds of plutonium—worth roughly \$4 million and enough to build seven nuclear bombs—is lodged in ventilation ducts at Colorado's Rocky Flats nuclear-weapons plant. The situation, according to LeRoy Moore of the Rocky Mountain Peace Center, threatens "criticality," which occurs when enough plutonium is contained in the same space to produce a spontaneous nuclear chain reaction, releasing lethal amounts of radiation into the surrounding environment. While the DOE claims no plutonium has escaped, a DOE-funded study by University of Colorado professor Harvey Nichols showed that plutonium particles routinely escape from Rocky Flats and that no filter can totally block their passage. Plutonium operations at Rocky Flats have been suspended since December, but DOE and EE&G—the corporation that assumed control of the plant in January—hope to resume production soon.

A road well traveled

Former John Birch Society leaders are heading a campaign in Portland, Ore., to change the city's newly named Martin Luther King Blvd. back to "Union Avenue." Funded by local businesses and supported by more than 30,000 petitioners, the "Save Union Avenue" campaign is crying "not racist." But in a city with the fastest-growing incidence of hate crimes in the nation, according to the U.S. Justice Department, the claim is questionable. According to Jamie Partridge of Portland's Rainbow Coalition chapter, a pamphlet published by one of the campaign's leaders says that blacks "seek to subject our nation to tyranny and to submerge our culture and religious heritage under a flood of cannibalism, voodooism and beastly jungle sex orgies." A citywide coalition is fighting to defend the renaming of the boulevard, which will appear on Portland's ballot May 15.

Sisters in arms

Rep. Patricia Schroeder (D-CO) is pushing a bill that would require the U.S. Army to open combat positions to women for a four-year trial period. Under her plan, women could participate in all military training programs, including combat arms and support. At the end of the test period, the Defense Department would recommend whether or not to make the openings permanent. The intent of the bill, says Schroeder, chairwoman of the House Armed Services Military Installations and Facilities Subcommittee, is to see how women would react in combat situations.

North of the border

As the walls of cultural and political misunderstanding crumble worldwide, this country is trying to set up a "tortilla curtain" on the U.S.-Mexican border, says Richard Castro, executive director of the Agency for Human Rights and Community Relations. Castro is one of a group of Hispanic leaders in Denver who are demanding that the U.S. Justice Department investigate increasing incidences of vigilante behavior, especially by white-supremacist groups in the San Diego area. An investigative program called "The Reporters," which aired on a local Denver station in March, showed graphic footage of harassment, robbery, beatings and brutalization of Mexicans along the border. Armed with sting rifles, pellet guns and other weapons, a group of high-school students dressed in paramilitary clothing took the investigative reporters with them on a "beaner hunt." The young white males openly stated that they were out to catch and interrogate Mexican nationals who enter the U.S. illegally and "teach them a lesson." More than 100 Mexicans have been killed along the border in the past two years.

The nation's economic ill health

A surprising number of college-educated blacks have remained mired at the bottom of the economic ladder, says a recent study by Bennett Harrison of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and consultant Lucy Gorham. Using census data, the two economists found that one out of three black male college graduates earned wages in 1987 that fell below the poverty line of about \$12,000 for a family of four—twice the number of whites. Almost half of all black female college graduates earned similar poverty-level wages.

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Party Secretary Nguyen Van Linh aims for economic prosperity without political reform.

Vietnam Communists continue to play monopoly

While other socialist countries are experimenting with multiparty political systems, Vietnam's leaders are adamantly committed to the Communist Party's monopoly of power.

Political reform is not an option for Vietnam, according to the full meeting of the Vietnamese Communist Party Central Committee, which ended its 15-day conference in Hanoi in late March. In its final communique, the party stressed the need for "political stability." On the eve of the party meeting, Hanoi Radio dashed the hopes of many younger, reform-minded party members by announcing, "In our country, there should be only one people and one party."

Before the party central committee meeting, in keeping with past practice, the party's 2,000 members were invited to comment on the draft resolutions to be considered. The party offices were inundated with replies, most of which, according to one source, demanded political change. The most common themes were the need for changes in the current leadership—with younger and reformist members moving up—for Vietnam's National Assembly to be fully independent of the party, for a committed anti-corruption drive and for genuine freedom of speech and association.

Instead, Vietnam is to get more of the same: tight political control. "The lessons of the current collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe, for the old leadership, is to strengthen the power of the party rather than to share it," says a senior party offi-

cial in Hanoi.

Since last summer, when the East German crisis began, Vietnam's leadership has increasingly resorted to silencing critics both inside and outside the party. As the spirit of democracy burned through Eastern Europe, it heightened the Vietnamese leaders' fears that it might soon spread to Vietnam.

At first, party leaders made small gestures, with the hope that it would stem the tide. The party's efforts to introduce some measure of democratic change was clearly evident in last November's local and municipal elections. The party encouraged the electorate to vote for young, bright and uncorrupted candidates to control government administration at local levels. The result was that throughout the country fewer than 20 percent of the old members were re-elected. Most of the newcomers were in their 30s and 40s. Although this measure of democracy was sponsored by the party, the result also reflected a widely felt dissatisfaction with the way in which the Communist Party has resisted political change for so long.

According to senior party member Bui Tin, who also edits the party newspaper *Nhan Dan*, the party's overriding aim is to unite the Vietnamese people in a single way to build a new path to socialism. To do this, he says, "we must democratize the party and we need personal freedom, more freedom of organization and association."

Since the beginning of this year, however, the party has increasingly cracked down on anyone suggesting the necessity of political reform or questioning Vietnam's socialist model. Several senior political figures in the south have been removed recently on the orders of party Secretary Nguyen Van Linh.

It is clear that Vietnam wants what the Chinese leaders have already tried to achieve: economic liberalism while maintaining the absolute power of the party. So far Hanoi has avoided generating the mass anti-government demonstrations that have followed economic reform in Eastern Europe and China. This is only partly the result of the party's strict suppression of dissent.

At present, *doi moi*, Vietnam's form of *glasnost* and *perestroika*, which Nguyen Van Linh was instrumental in introducing, is popular. And in the economic sphere it has had an immediate effect. In less than two years Vietnam's three-figure inflation has been reduced to less than 20 percent. Food lines and rationing are now virtually non-existent. The abolition of collective farming has not only helped the country become self-sufficient in grain but has also boosted production of rice to a 1.5-million-ton surplus for export this year. According to one source, Vietnam's economic reforms are so successful that Moscow has even sent a research team to Hanoi to learn from the Vietnamese experience.

While the party is well aware that economic prosperity will soon lead to demands for political reform, as it did elsewhere, officials remain committed to pursuing economic reform while maintaining tight political control.

As one Vietnamese reformer from Ho Chi Minh City, now himself under a cloud, says, "Tiananmen should serve as a warning to the party that this is a dangerous line to follow." If the party has not taken political reform on board by the Eighth Party Congress, due later this year, a bloody confrontation between the party's leaders and the Vietnamese people may be only a matter of time.

—Larry Jagan

By Bob Eleff

MANY FAMILIES WITH LOW AND MODERATE incomes confronted the nightmare of homelessness rather than the dream of homeownership in the '80s, as housing prices and rent levels galloped far ahead of incomes.

The good news is that after the Reagan administration slashed the budget at the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) from \$30.9 billion to \$7.5 billion.

BUDGET

President George Bush is resolutely holding steady at those shrunken levels. But that's as kind and gentle as Bush's housing policy is likely to get, as revealed by his proposed 1991 budget.

The conditions this budget claims to address are grim:

- Two earners working full time at the minimum wage cannot afford to rent a two-bedroom apartment at HUD's "fair market rate" in any state of the nation. Those rent levels also exceed the full amount of grants provided by Aid to Families with Dependent Children in 42 states.

- About 170,000 families are on the waiting list for public housing in New York City, 60,000 in Chicago, 17,000 in Washington, 15,000 in San Antonio. Lists are closed in some two-thirds of the 27 major cities surveyed by the U.S. Conference of Mayors.

- One out of five renters—totaling 6.1 million households—paid more than 50 percent of his or her income for housing in 1985.

- Between 1974 and 1985, the number of apartments renting for less than \$300 a month declined by 4.5 million units.

- Requests for emergency shelter by the homeless increased by an average of 25 percent in 1989 in the major cities surveyed by the Conference of Mayors.

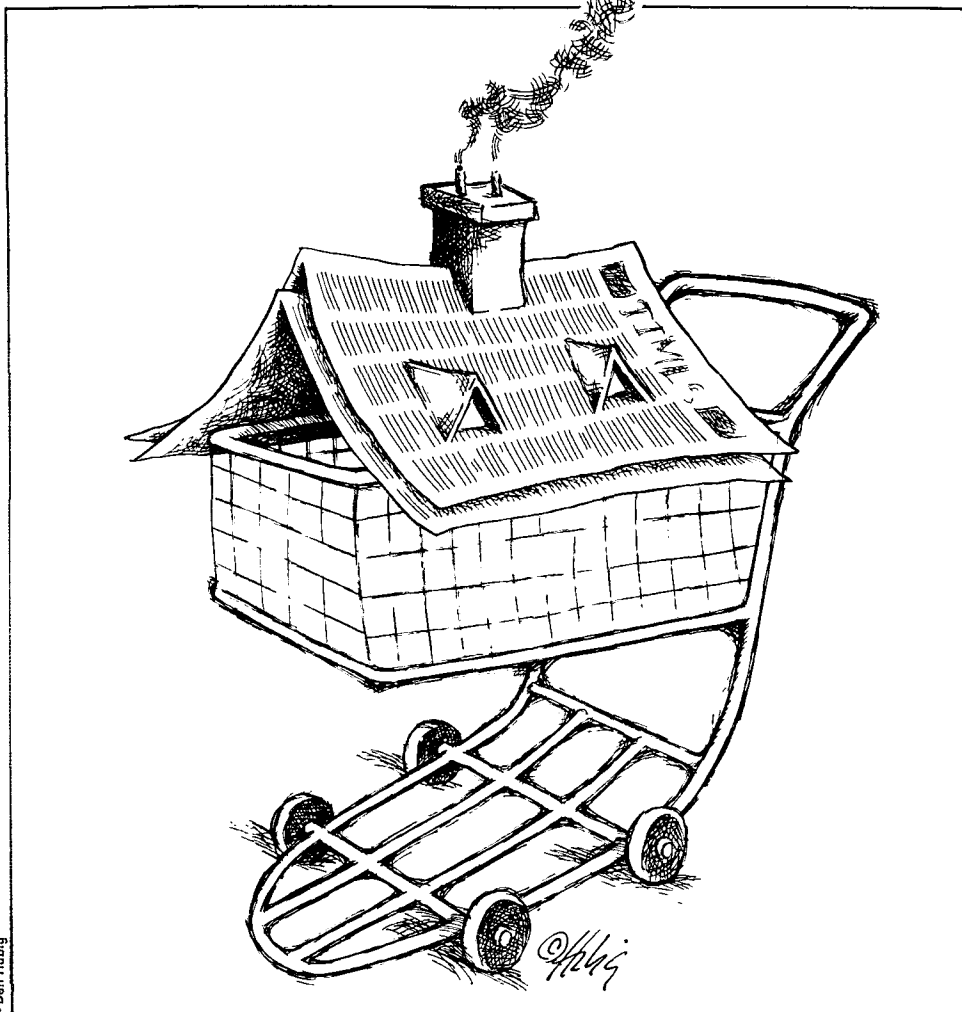
To meet these problems, the Bush administration proposes to spend \$13.6 billion in fiscal year 1991, a significant increase over this year's \$9 billion. But there's less to the Bush agenda than meets the eye.

"The administration proclaims \$5 billion in new spending," says Donald Campbell, a staff director of the Senate banking and housing committee, "but once you begin to peel away the feathers, there's not a lot of bird there."

The largest piece of budgetary fluff is the inclusion of \$7.7 billion for a five-year extension of rent-subsidy contracts that are about to expire. Such renewals have never previously been included in budget requests; Congress does not consider them to be incremental funding. Campbell says that when the smoke and mirrors are removed, the 1991 budget shows a cut of \$520 million in real terms compared with last year's.

As a result, the number of additional families receiving housing assistance will continue to fall. During the Carter administration, an average of 324,000 families were added to the housing-assistance rolls annually. The number declined to 161,000 in Ronald Reagan's first term; Bush is proposing 123,000 for 1991.

These figures do not begin to match the need. The Conference of Mayors reported that fewer than 30 percent of eligible low-income households receive any form of government housing aid.



Proposed housing plan commits few resources

One could argue that a nation spending \$90 billion a year to subsidize housing should not suffer from such conditions. But in the U.S., five out of six of those subsidy dollars go to relatively affluent homeowners who take advantage of provisions in the tax code that allow the deduction of mortgage interest and property taxes, the deferral of capital gains from housing sales and other tax breaks. Families earning more than \$50,000 a year receive more than half of this bounty—about \$40 billion.

Faith, HOPE and charity: HUD Secretary Jack Kemp's undiminished enthusiasm for supply-side economics stops well short of advocating direct increases in the supply of public housing. One indirect attempt to convince the private sector to build more affordable housing is the creation of 50 Housing Opportunity Zones, in which cities would remove such barriers to construction as restrictive zoning and building codes as well as regressive property taxes and rent controls.

Fewer than 4,000 units are expected to be added in 1991—and only for the elderly and handicapped.

The solution Bush holds out to those in need of affordable housing is HOPE, or Homeownership and Opportunity for People Everywhere. The budget's major initiative, it envisions little more than the privatization of the current public-housing stock.

The plan would provide tenants in public housing with \$240 million to enable them to purchase and renovate their projects. Publicly owned properties that are financially distressed or vacant would also go on the selling block. Vouchers would be made available to help pay operating costs for five years.

Low-income housing advocates say HOPE skirts the real problem facing the poor. Campbell likens the program to a disaster at sea with 2,000 passengers floundering in the water and room for only 500 people in lifeboats.

"We don't have anything against homeownership," says Rich West, communications director of the Low Income Housing Information Service, "but the narrow emphasis on it is insidious. It's not just the centerpiece of Bush's program; it's the whole shooting match."

West alleges that the plan is impractical. "No-interest loans were not advanced as part of the plan. At today's interest rates, even a small \$30,000 mortgage will cost \$300 a month. We need more affordable units at below \$250 a month. People earning the minimum wage can't even cover operating costs."

Research done last year by the Low Income Housing Preservation Committee found that 70 percent of the tenants in public housing lived on incomes below \$14,000, half the U.S. median.

Vanishing resources: While the administration relies heavily on the existing affordable housing stock for its programs, that resource is also at risk. More than 200,000 units could be lost by 1994, and an additional 160,000 units by 2004.

The problem stems from incentives Washington gave to private developers in the '60s to insure the availability of units for low-income tenants. In addition to mortgage insurance and interest-rate subsidies, developers were promised the option of "pre-paying"—paying off—their mortgages after 20 years. If they pre-pay, they can raise rents to market-rate levels or convert the units to condominiums.

The HUD budget would provide about \$60,000 per unit to tenant groups wishing to purchase these buildings. Alternatively, greater incentives would be made available to owners to dissuade them from pre-paying. If all else fails, HUD promises to protect residents with larger housing vouchers to enable them to pay higher rents.

That latter assurance is not enough, says Larry Yates, director of the Anti-Displacement Project at the Low Income Housing Information Service.

"Owners have said, 'We guarantee all current tenants can stay as long as they want,' but when they leave, the owner is free to raise the rents to market rate," he says. "You lose the massive federal investment that has been made in those buildings for the future. They would be permanently removed from the low-income housing supply."

In the Bush plan, the hallmark of the Reagan housing program, five-year housing vouchers issued to tenants to supplement their incomes would continue. Critics argue that these vouchers—substituted for 15-year certificates that were tied to specific properties—are of little help to tenants because there is a shortage of affordable housing from which to choose.

A study for HUD done by Abt Associates found that only 61 percent of tenants nationwide who were issued vouchers were able to find housing in which to use them, although about one-third of those tenants simply used the vouchers in their current units.

"We don't know why the success rates aren't much closer to 90 percent," says Stephen Kennedy, who directed the study.

Low-income housing shortages are hard to prove because data on vacancy rates is not available by rent level, Kennedy says. But the Abt study did show that in such tight housing markets as New York and Boston, success rates dropped to well below 50 percent.

Critics of vouchers also say they give developers no incentives to increase the supply of affordable housing. In testimony last spring before the House Subcommittee on Housing and Urban Affairs, Abe Biderman, commissioner of New York City's Department of Housing Preservation and Development, said that vouchers should be project-based and should be issued for more than five years.

"A project-based certificate can then induce a developer to build a unit knowing that he will have a reliable income flow for a long period of time. He will not build a unit on the anticipation that somebody may or may not come in with a voucher," he says.

The philosophy underlying the Bush housing plan is similar to that of the Reagan administration: there is no need for an explicit housing or urban policy. It is simply assumed that unleashing the forces of the market—removing regulatory restraints (Housing Opportunity Zones) and raising the purchasing power of the poor to enable them to subsidize existing market alternatives (HOPE and vouchers)—will produce improvements.

Housing advocates, however, say that ideology is no substitute for resources. "The programs are simply underfunded," West says. "It's the classic problem of the Bush administration: good intentions but no backbone."

Bob Eleff is editor of a community newspaper in Minneapolis.

IN THESE TIMES MAY 2-8, 1990 7

U.S. green movement needs to be colorized

THE PAUCITY OF DARK FACES IN MOST OF THE crowds celebrating Earth Day on April 22 provided further evidence that the green movement in this country is too white. Despite the fact that racial minorities are the chief victims of environmental pollution, few are involved in the organized struggle to clean it up. And while few dispute the ecology movement's racial isolation, there is considerable disagreement about an explanation for it.

A coalition of civil-rights groups blames racism. In a letter circulated last January, the coalition accused eight major environmental groups—the Wilderness Society, the Sierra Club, the National Audubon Society, the Environmental Defense Fund, Friends of

ENVIRONMENT

the Earth, the Natural Resources Defense Council, the National Parks and Conservation Association and the Izaak Walton League—of racist hiring practices. Although they demanded the environmental groups take steps within 60 days to assure that 30 to 40 percent of their staffs are members of minority groups, the deadline passed without an official response.

But that doesn't mean the accused environmental groups are insensitive to the charges. Spokesmen for the organizations conceded they had poor records of hiring and promoting minority employees, but they denied racist motives. Instead, they attributed the movement's racial exclusivity to the scarcity of minorities in the pool of environmental specialists. And, they added, those rare blacks and Hispanics with the requisite training have not been attracted to the meager salaries offered by their non-profit groups.

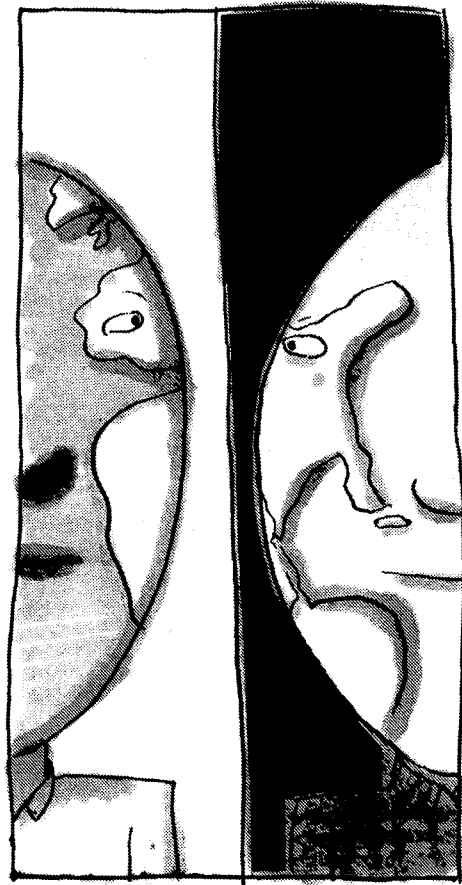
The great divide: Aside from those disparate interpretations on the role of green racism, there is a wall of distrust between the black community and the predominantly white environmental movement. And some of that distrust is well earned.

"It's a legacy of the early '70s," Mike McCloskey, chairman of the Sierra Club, is quoted as saying in the April edition of the *New Age Journal*. "There was a lot of competition over what should be the most pressing concerns in American society. We kept trying to argue that the black community ought to be interested in the environment. And they kept saying, 'OK, you've got some valid interests; but ours are more weighty.' We kept going around in circles and gave up."

The incident often cited to demonstrate the lack of communication between racial minorities and white environmentalists occurred at San Jose City College during the first Earth Day celebration in 1970: white organizers bought a new Cadillac and then buried it to dramatize the harmful effects on the environment. The Black Student Union demonstrated in protest, arguing that the money wasted on that car would have been better spent on the problems of the inner cities.

Additionally, there are differing motives at work; most of the established groups—such as the Sierra Club and the Audubon Society—started life as protectors of the wilderness and nature enthusiasts, so it shouldn't be surprising that they have little in common with those whose primary concerns are the inner cities' economic and public-health issues.

There's also no mystery about why black



organizations had trouble shifting their priorities from immediate survival issues to those of a more abstract, provisional nature. Only recently has science been able to irrefutably link environmental toxins to definite health effects.

Although that realization has not fully penetrated the black community, environmental pollution is gaining attention from black leaders, and for good reason. In the workplace, black employees continue to be concentrated in the low-paying, high-risk, blue-collar occupations that tend to have health-threatening environments. And in their communities, inadequate low-income housing and residential segregation concentrate black and Hispanic populations in areas where risks from industrial lead and auto pollution are often extreme. Consequently, racial minorities are disproportionately victimized by environmental health hazards.

For instance, between 1976 and 1980 more than 50 percent of all black infants tested for lead contamination had blood levels higher than the U.S. Centers for Disease Control's standards. Additionally, a study by the National Center for Health Statistics found that black people, particularly urban boys, are nearly three times more likely to die of asthma than are whites.

Targeted toxins: According to a 1987 study conducted by the United Church of

Despite the fact that racial minorities are the chief victims of environmental pollution, few are involved in the organized struggle to clean it up.

Christ's Commission for Racial Justice, race was the most significant of several variables in determining the location of commercial hazardous-waste sites in residential areas—even more significant than socioeconomic status. The study found that the three sites accounting for more than 40 percent of the nation's total capacity for commercial hazardous-waste disposal are located in predominantly African-American or Hispanic communities. The study also revealed the following:

- The nation's largest hazardous-waste landfill, which receives toxic materials from 45 states and several foreign countries, is located in Sumter County, Ala., a predominantly African-American community in the heart of the state's "black belt";

- The predominantly African-American and Hispanic Southeast Side of Chicago has the greatest concentration of hazardous-waste sites in the nation; and

- Puerto Rico is one of the most heavily polluted places in the world.

The manifest discrimination evident in the placement of toxic-waste facilities has energized the civil-rights community around issues long considered outside their ken. Organized protests against what has been termed "environmental racism" are increasing throughout the country, and the issue has forged growing cooperation between certain segments of the environmental movement and grass-roots organizations in minority communities. In the Chicago area, for instance, members of Greenpeace USA have hooked up with residents of the predominantly black suburb of Robbins, Ill., to fight the scheduled construction of a waste incinerator.

Acknowledging racism: Greenpeace, which was not one of the environmental groups denounced in the January letter, has long decried the green movement's monochromatic hue and has spearheaded attempts to help it become more colorized. In addition to its stepped-up struggle against toxic wastes, Greenpeace has instituted aggressive membership campaigns designed to attract minority participation. The path-breaking environmental group has also led the charge in forming alliances with other constituencies.

Last month, for example, Greenpeace organized an international demonstration protesting a U.S. chemical company's shipments of poisonous mercury waste to South Africa. Those activities are not only related by ecological logic but are also linked in the cause of Greenpeace's fight against environmental racism. "The practices of dumping American and European toxic wastes in Third World countries is also an issue of racism," explained Greenpeace official Sharon Pines.

Several of the more recently established environmental groups are following Greenpeace's lead in reaching out for minority input and in linking the struggle for a clean environment to economic justice. In recent months the issue of the movement's racial schisms has dominated discussions at environmental conferences and in the journals.

Yet civil-rights organizations continue to show little interest in ecological issues. It's

still rare to find environmental items on the agendas of the major civil-rights groups. At last year's African-American summit in New Orleans, delegates completely omitted environmental issues from their discussions on the survival prospects of the black community.

"To be quite candid about it, we've not been as conscientious as perhaps we should have been," says Norris McDonald, president and founder of the Center for Environment, Commerce and Energy (CECE), a four-year-old black environmental group based in Washington, D.C. "I don't blame anybody for our lack of concern about environmental pollution. It's our fault."

A former member of Friends of the Earth, McDonald says he formed CECE to better educate the black community about the devastating effects of environmental pollution. "I realized there was a cultural barrier between white environmentalists and the black community," McDonald says, "and the stakes were too high to allow any barrier to communication about the dangers of toxic pollution." He believes African-Americans have to begin assuming more responsibility in the fight for a clean environment. "I don't fault the civil-rights groups for focusing on other issues—that's how they saw their mission. But our mission is to bring African-Americans the news that environmental issues are too crucial to ignore."

Thomas Atkins, a black official of Environmental Action, is more pointed in his criticism of the civil-rights movement's ecological activity. "We must make environmental pollution a priority on our social-justice agenda, along with housing, jobs, the military buildup, drugs and illiteracy," he says. "The traditional elite are not going to save me, my people or my community from the polluters. However, I can save myself."

For example, Atkins adds, "the South is a toxic dumping ground, but it is also home to the highest proportion of black elected officials and the bastion of black higher education. I look to all our leaders, whether in the political, academic, media or industrial realm, to inspire us and make environmental concerns a part of our life."

Tainting the greens: But some African-American political leaders are not yet ready to join the environmental cause. In Robbins, one of Illinois' poorest municipalities, the city's black elected officials support the waste incinerator for its proposed economic benefits. Robbins' mayor has seized the opportunity to portray Greenpeace as a white elitist group selfishly pursuing its own interest to the detriment of her resource-starved constituents.

According to Pines, who is Greenpeace's Midwest regional executive director, the city's leaders have been duped by the industrial interests pushing the incinerator. "The company that's trying to build the incinerator has been boasting that hundreds of new jobs will be created," she explains. "We've shown how that simply won't be the case, but it's difficult to counter the emotional appeal of that argument."

Pines believes that corporate interests play a large role in aggravating the divisions between the African-American community and the environmental movement. Historically, the affected industries have provided generous donations to civil-rights groups, expecting silence in return. And, generally, they got what they paid for.

These days, however, many African-Americans are beginning to realize that the price of that silence was much too high. □



Schedule S and L (Form 1040)



Name(s)

SS#

1 Your contribution to bailing out savings and loan industry. Enter \$1,000 (for now).....

2 Specify recipient of your contribution:

- ☐ Free-spending bankers
- ☐ Politicians on the take
- ☐ Embezzling mobsters
- ☐ CIA secret agents.

(✓check
as many as
you want.)

3 Don't be angry. We've all bounced checks. Imagine how bad you'd feel if you bounced a whole bank.

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By Kevin Kelly

DALLAS

WHEN FEDERAL REGULATORS OFFERED \$11 billion in tax benefits and cash incentives to entice investors to take over more than 79 insolvent Texas thrifts in 1988, congressional critics howled: "Giveaway!" They aimed much of their ire at the \$900 million in tax benefits that financier Ronald O. Perelman received for purchasing five failing thrifts. Indeed, the lucrative deal struck by the chairman of Revlon Inc. has come to symbolize the mini-bailout, dubbed the Southwest Plan.

More than a year later, the plan has hardly been a bonanza for most investors. Only four thrifts showed exceptional returns in 1989, thanks to federal assistance. The most notable was Perelman's First Gibraltar Savings Bank in Dallas, which earned \$129 million last year.

The other 12 thrifts created by the Southwest Plan fared worse, even those that received substantial tax breaks. Southwest Savings Association in Dallas lost \$125 million last year, while the remaining thrifts, with combined assets of \$30 billion, earned \$79 million. And most operators, struggling to meet new capital requirements and rebuild devastated franchises, reinvested their profits. Many don't expect to pay dividends before the mid-'90s. Says one new owner, Texas Trust Bank Chairman David Quinn: "It hasn't been easy."

Up against the wall: Nothing about the Southwest Plan has been easy. Controversial from the start, it was designed to halt the hemorrhaging of Texas thrifts. To achieve this goal quickly, M. Danny Wall, then chairman of the Federal Home Loan Bank Board, offered cash subsidies, tax breaks and relaxed capital standards to attract buyers for ailing thrifts. If that didn't pique lawmakers enough, Wall enraged them further by rush-

Investors not getting rich off failed savings and loans

ing ahead with the 1988 rescues, even pushing through deals on New Year's Eve to beat a deadline on tax breaks. To top it off, the Southwest Plan went into effect while the thrift insurance fund was insolvent.

Ultimately, it was Wall's inability to estimate what the deals would cost the government, combined with the perception that they were too rich, that led to his resignation under pressure from Congress earlier this year.

The thrifts grouped under the plan lost \$4.3 billion in 1988, but the new owners moved fast to correct problems. For starters, they sold off \$7 billion in high-risk assets such as junk bonds and bad real-estate loans. They also pumped more than \$1 billion in fresh capital into the cash-starved industry. Even though it meant losing money, they weaned their thrifts off the high-cost deposits their predecessors used to stave off the inevitable. Rates on jumbo certificates of deposits in Texas, once as high as 10.25 percent, have fallen to 8.25 percent.

Ironically, the much-maligned Southwest Plan shines next to current bailout efforts. While the federal government struggles to assemble a mechanism to deal with the crisis, the thrift industry is losing \$40 million a day. Estimates of the total bailout cost have soared to \$500 billion, a far cry from the government's \$167 billion financial commitment.

Moreover, the federal government is finding little private-sector interest in defunct thrifts. The Resolution Trust Corp. (RTC), the agency in charge of selling thrift assets

seized by regulators, has found buyers for only 50 thrifts and \$30 billion in assets. That's hardly a dent in its portfolio of 600 insolvent thrifts and assets worth \$300 billion.

The Bush administration and Congress are paralyzed. Neither wants to admit the mounting costs or appear too lenient. The current bailout efforts, headed by Federal

ECONOMY

Deposit Insurance Corp. Chairman William Seidman, give investors few incentives to snatch up properties. Says one real-estate investor, "Wall might have been too generous with the tax breaks, but these guys aren't offering us anything but busted assets."

The plan has hardly been a bonanza for most investors.

The government has also reneged on its commitment to low-income housing. Last year Congress ordered the RTC to turn some of its portfolio of homes over to low-income families. But the agency has refused to lift a hand, and now Seidman says he simply won't fulfill the low-income housing commitment.

Current federal inaction hasn't stopped criticism of prior deals. Specifically, critics point out that the generous tax breaks received by several investors more than made up for lackluster profits. For example, even though Centex Corp.'s Texas Trust earned

only \$854,000 in 1989, the company reaped tax breaks worth \$7.5 million. Over the next nine years the Dallas homebuilder, which paid \$26.5 million for four failed thrifts, stands to gain \$68 million from tax breaks. Says Alexandria, Va.-based thrift industry analyst Bert Ely, "These investors don't have anything to complain about."

They made a deal: Perelman's deal continues to stick in Washington's craw. Aside from tax benefits, federal regulators promised Perelman about \$5.1 billion in federal subsidies. In return, he paid \$315 million for his thrift. Gibraltar Chairman Gerald J. Ford denies accusations of a giveaway, calling the deal "well structured."

For his investment, Perelman landed the best properties regulators had to offer. Unlike most Southwest Plan deals, which created small, scattered branch networks, First Gibraltar boasts 97 branches in major Texas cities, including Dallas and San Antonio. While most Southwest Plan thrifts spent last year retrenching, First Gibraltar added \$1.3 billion in new loans to its books. Industry analysts figure Perelman stands to make paper profits of more than \$1.5 billion during the '90s from Gibraltar's tax breaks and earnings. Ford boasts, "We're a thrift that works."

But Gibraltar has been an outstanding success in part because its terms were far from typical. The majority of investors—such as Lone Star Technologies, Inc., which bought 12 insolvent thrifts—didn't receive tax breaks or don't have a parent company that can use them. And yield-maintenance levels—the amount of federal assistance pledged by the government to guarantee earnings on bad assets—varied across deals. One Washington, D.C.-based thrift consultant explains, "How you did is largely a result of how well you negotiated."

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S&L

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Consider the case of Temple-Inland, Inc. The Dibold, Texas, paper-products company bought three insolvent thrifts with assets of \$4 billion for \$128 million in September 1988. The new thrift, named Guaranty Federal Savings Bank, eked out \$1 million in earnings last year. Thrift officials complain that federal subsidies barely covered overhead expenses and the cost of managing non-performing loans, which equal half of Guaranty's assets.

Temple-Inland isn't alone. American Federal Bank, owned by Dallas-based steel-maker Lone Star Technologies, saved \$20 million last year by closing 39 branches and reducing staff 45 percent to 500. It earned \$17 million in 1989. But Lone Star reinvested the profits because the thrift didn't meet capital requirements. The thrift, which is still

out of capital compliance, must raise another \$28 million by June 30. But Lone Star doesn't have the cash—its steel unit is in bankruptcy proceedings—and the thrift could wind up as a ward of the regulators again.

Few, if any, of the new thrift owners can afford to pay dividends because they must build up their franchises. Franklin Federal Bancorp., owned by Dallas-based Club Corp. of America, earned \$7 million last year but had to reinvest the money to boost capital. Dallas-based Bluebonnet Savings Bank, which yielded a whopping 62 percent return on investment, ploughed its \$31 million net income into a new computer system and advertising to rebuild market share. Neither company had access to tax breaks. "Some of the deals weren't the gifts everyone thought," concludes Stephens Inc. bank analyst Frank Anderson.

The federal government isn't improving

matters. Last year Congress, as part of its thrift bailout legislation, overturned a key provision in the deals that excused Southwest Plan thrifts from meeting new capital requirements this year. And several thrifts were caught off guard by tougher rules regulating what counts as capital. Now at least six of the 16 thrifts have to raise the capital or face federal takeover.

Some industry analysts speculate that many investors will eventually flee the thrift business. Ely says most of the franchises have no hope of becoming major thrifts and promise little return once the tax breaks are used up. "There's no reason they won't hand the keys back once the tax breaks are gone," he says.

Critics may quicken the pace of departures. Later this year, the House Committee on Banking, Finance and Urban Affairs will begin yet another round of hearings to determine whether Wall gave too much away. The

possibility that the federal government might renege on other parts of the deals has thrift executives worried. "The government should spend less time going over old ground" and get on with the bailout, insists one thrift chairman.

But given the history of the federal bailout, nobody is counting on relief for the foreseeable future.

Kevin Kelly is a Dallas-based journalist.

Humanism & Religion: Enemies ?



God or Man? Faith or reason? This world or the next? If you listen to the electronic fundamentalists or village atheists, these are mutually exclusive choices.

In our time we've witnessed the inability of secular modernity to bring moral coherence or spiritual depth to life, and the concomitant rise of menacing fundamentalisms, from the so-called Bible Belt to Israel, the Muslim world, and beyond — not to mention the proliferation of bizarre cults. Must we, then, opt for either modernity's "polar night of icy darkness and hardness" (Max Weber) or some piper? Heaven forbid!

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AIDS

Continued from page 3

a bit more firmly rooted in the here and now. They responded to the threat of AIDS among intravenous drug users with an aggressive clean-needle program that, as of December 1988, held the number of AIDS cases in the economically depressed city to a mere 14—this despite the policies of the most reactionary British government in half a century. Health officials in Holland, with its tradition of cultural tolerance, have held down the HIV infection rate in much the same way.

Back in the U.S., the Dinkins administration, facing a much larger problem, has adopted diametrically backward policies. Fortunately, Dinkins has been only marginally more effective in keeping out clean needles than the Bush administration has in eradicating cocaine. Since the demise of the needle-exchange program in February, the issue has gained political prominence. Liberal leaders like Ruth Messinger, the newly elected Manhattan borough president, are laying low in fear of making political waves. But Yolanda Serrano, leader of the Association for Drug Abuse Prevention and Treatment (ADAPT), one of the few organizations dedicated to improving conditions for junkies, has been touting the benefits of free needles on TV talk shows. ACT-UP members, already furious at Myers for supporting the quarantining and contact-tracing of AIDS patients in his previous role as state commissioner of health in Indiana, have reacted with astonishment and anger to city and state policies that fail to give AIDS prevention top priority.

And then there is Jon Parker, fast becoming the Johnny Appleseed of the free-needles movement. A Yale graduate student in public health, Parker has clandestinely distributed needles from Boston to Washington, D.C. But in early March, he and other members the National AIDS Brigade and ACT-UP decided to go public. On a snowy Tuesday, about 100 AIDS-care advocates headed for a street corner on Manhattan's depressed Lower East Side, one of the busiest drug markets in the city. On one side of the intersection a dozen or so Guardian Angels screamed, "Lock 'em up," while across the street Parker and his group set up a small literature table and passed out bleach and small, neatly capped syringes that had been purchased out of state.

But the well-orchestrated display invited dramatic consequences. In no time at all a phalanx of cops parted the waves of reporters and cameramen and began arresting free-needle advocates like Cynthia Cochran, a 66-year-old nurse who specializes in AIDS cases and who carried a sign that read, "Behind every AIDS baby [is] a dirty needle." Also arrested was Richard Elovich, a 36-year-old intravenous drug user turned ACT-UP organizer who yelled, "Give addicts a chance—dead addicts don't recover."

All 10 arrested, including Parker, pleaded not guilty to criminal possession of a hypodermic needle—a misdemeanor—and were released without bail. The case has yet to go to trial. Parker, who was acquitted in Boston in January on similar charges by a judge who said he had acted in furtherance of public health, is hoping for a similar verdict in New York.

If the 10 are acquitted, needles will become de facto legal, if not de jure in New York, as policies on AIDS and hypodermics will take a small but significant step in the direction of rationality. ☐

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NAMIBIA

By Jim Wurst

WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA

WHEN NAMIBIA BECAME THE 160TH MEMBER of the United Nations on April 23, an extraordinary episode in national liberation and international cooperation came to an end and the delicate work of building a new nation began.

South Africa's 74-year occupation of the territory ended two days before, when the Republic of Namibia was born. The signs of South African politics will soon be gone, but the legacy remains. The road to freedom involved not only decades of colonial and racial exploitation but also a 23-year bush war waged by the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO)—which now as the dominant political party controls the new government. Two weeks after the constitution was ratified in February, SWAPO leader Sam Nujoma was selected to be Namibia's first president.

Few countries have come into being with so much international goodwill. For decades, individual governments, private groups and the U.N. have championed the liberation of Africa's last colony. In 1978, the U.N. Security Council unanimously passed Resolution 435, outlining a peace plan calling for the disarm-

ament of all hostile parties, the withdrawal of South Africa from the territory and U.N.-supervised elections for a new government.

Resolution 435 sat on the shelf, ignored and maligned, until two years ago, when it was given new life by a combination of superpower interest in solving regional disputes and South Africa's military defeat in Angola, which made holding onto Namibia too costly in white lives. A 1988 treaty signed in Brazzaville, Congo, by South Africa, Angola and Cuba called for the implementation of 435—as the entire peace process has been dubbed—and the parallel withdrawal of Cuban forces from Angola.

These Brazzaville Accords pulled the U.N. into the middle of what had looked like an endless war. The United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG), the largest peacekeeping operation in nearly 30 years, brought more than 7,000 military personnel, police monitors and civilians into the country to oversee the return of exiles, the withdrawal of South African troops, the disbanding of other military and paramilitary units, the registration of voters for last November's elections and the monitoring of that election. While credit for the success of this entire process belongs to the people of Namibia, the U.N. has gained tremendously as an effective alternative to endless conflict.

Strong constitution: Namibia's constitution, called by some a model of liberal democracy, enshrines the "one person, one vote" ideal, bars ethnic and sex discrimination, outlaws the death penalty and bans preventive detention. The checks and balances among the branches of government are stronger than in most European parliaments and ensure civilian authority over the government.

The November elections for a constituent assembly—now the country's National Assembly, or parliament—to write the constitution resulted in an absolute victory for SWAPO, but not the two-thirds that would have allowed SWAPO to write the constitution without cooperation from other parties. No one predicted how well these 72 representatives from competing factions would work together. It was apparent they realized that a chance to build their nation on their terms, with the assistance but not interference of other countries, was an opportunity that would never be repeated, so they made the most of it.

Forced to work in cooperation, SWAPO took a step further and worked for consensus. The party decided that decisions should be approved unanimously, which meant SWAPO made more compromises than its position of strength required. Clearly the goal was to set an example of reconciliation at the top that could serve as a role model for the competing economic, political and ethnic divisions that run throughout the country. Judging from the deliberations of the assembly, the quality of the new constitution and the dialogue that has marked the transition period, the strategy is working.

Some SWAPO supporters think that, in the interest of consensus and reconciliation, the party has given too much away. After all, they argue, their party won. "National reconciliation should not be taken too far, where we are compromising everything we have fought for and end up with nothing," says Ignatius Shihwameni, president of NANSO, the pro-SWAPO student union.

But compromise could well be the only course SWAPO can follow, because the new government must please two vital audiences that often have conflicting demands: Namibia's poor and international lenders and developers. Since the election, SWAPO has been urging its supporters not to expect too much too soon, and local SWAPO leaders think the poor will give the government a few years. Foreign governments and international lenders visiting Namibia have made approving sounds and backed their words up with financial aid.

Testing grounds: Change, however, must come early to Katutura, Windhoek's black township. This glaring monument to apartheid is home for about 50,000 people, half the city's population. Some maps do not even show Katutura, appropriate for a place whose name means "we do not want to live here" in Herero.

Katutura's first buildings went up in the '60s, when blacks were moved from their homes in other parts of the city. Since then the township has grown and is divided along tribal and economic lines. At the top rung of the economic ladder is "Luxury Hill," the neat spacious homes of low-level civil servants. At the bottom are the "single quarters" where the poorest live and sometimes work among dilapidated shacks and open sewers. SWAPO won nearly 100 percent of the vote in Katutura—the party's colors of blue, red and green can be seen on buildings and clothing throughout the township. When Nujoma returned from exile, he made Katutura his home. SWAPO must improve life in this troubled township if independence is to mean anything more than a new flag.

The other testing ground for the new government is the north of the country, particularly Owamboland. Namibia's most populated region, Owamboland is also the home of the Owambo, the country's largest tribe and SWAPO's core constituency. It also has the best farmland and the most water.

The 23-year bush war between SWAPO and the South African Defense Forces (SADF)—with its locally trained Koevoet terrorist unit, was concentrated in Owamboland, so the bitterness of those years remains. The new government will have to heal lingering wounds as it works to invigorate the region, which is expected to serve as the country's economic engine. There will be tremendous pressure from residents for land reform, housing and jobs—the majority of the 42,000 returnees last year settled in the north. While the government says it recognizes the needs of the people, it has also pledged that it will not redistribute land or pour non-existent money into job-creation programs. The trick will be addressing those needs while building a strong economic base and at the same time keeping an eye on the possible resurgence of political and tribal differences.

Staying secure: Namibia's security problems—domestic as well as international—are not as severe as they would have been had the country gained independence a few years earlier. The superpowers are less interested in African sideshows than in previous decades, and South Africa is concerned enough with domestic issues to avoid meddling in Namibian affairs. Still, the new nation is unlikely to experience a honeymoon where regional tensions are concerned.

Namibia's northern border with Angola

presents the most obvious military problem. While the 1988 Brazzaville Accords called for the withdrawal of South African forces from Namibia and Cuban troops from Angola, the agreement did not address UNITA's guerrilla war against the Angolan government. The South Africa- and U.S.-backed UNITA has not gained any advantage from the accords. Angolan government forces, even without their Cuban allies, earlier this year were able to push deeper into UNITA territory, and now there are reports of ex-Koevoet fighters working with UNITA in Angola as well as Namibia.

Washington has shown where its priorities lay. In March, the State Department announced aid to Namibia would be \$500,000 this year and \$7.8 million in 1991. In contrast, UNITA currently gets \$50 million a year.

Another security risk in the north—one that means more to the peace and sovereignty of Namibia than any other question—must be addressed: how to avoid a civil war. The SADF demobilized Koevoet last year, but not before opening SADF arsenals to them. Ex-SWAPO fighters and other pro-SWAPO residents have undoubtedly stockpiled arms. Each side is convinced the other will attack after the U.N. and international observers are gone. This, of course, creates a first-strike mentality.

To avoid a bloodbath, the new government, UNTAG and the South African administration launched a series of reconciliation meetings shortly after the November elections. Concentrating on the north, where most of the animosity and hidden arms lay, ex-Koevoet and their victims met to talk. UNTAG and police officials involved in organizing these continuing talks say they are confident that the people are more interested in peace than in revenge. While there have been isolated incidents of robbery and murder, they appear to be criminal rather than political and have not sparked reprisals.

This spirit of reconciliation is even working its way into the military and police. The new army, the Namibian Defense Forces, will be created from the ground up, while the national police force is being reorganized from its colonial predecessor, the South West African Police (SWAPOL). In both cases, former adversaries are being trained to work together, with the new forces made up of half SWAPO fighters and half soldiers and police who served South Africa.

Top officials and regular police officers who served in SWAPOL will retain their positions. The rank and file, however, is being altered to include half SWAPOL and half SWAPO partisans who received police training in other African countries. The British Commonwealth—which Namibia joined upon independence—has sent trainers to help create an integrated force. Home Affairs Minister Hifikepunye Pohamba says the new force will be a practical test of Namibia's national reconciliation policy.

The army, in its infancy, has no heavy weapons or aircraft—the only training so far is for a small contingent to serve as a presidential honor guard. In the interim, Kenya, one of the countries that contributed troops to UNTAG, is staying on with 1,000 troops to act as Namibia's army. Half the new recruits come from SWAPO's military arm, the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN), and half from the South

West African Territorial Forces (SWATF), the locally recruited soldiers who served under the South African army.

New loyalties: The spectacle of former antagonists as comrades in arms—to the point of assuring the safety of Sam Nujoma, a man half of them would have shot on sight less than two years ago—is the clearest testament to the optimism the smooth transition to independence has generated. At the opening of the army training camp in February, Nujoma, who as president also serves as commander in chief of the armed forces, told the recruits, "Last year at this time, you were still engaged in bitter fighting. Now you are here as brothers and compatriots to work together for the peaceful development of our country."

In both forces, the test of a new national loyalty over old sectarian loyalties may come very soon. Either a spillover from the Angolan war or internal tensions in the north could show if the Namibian military will match the cohesion demonstrated so far by the politicians.

Apartheid's legacy will be difficult to overcome, although there have been some official moves to hasten its departure. In the past few years, certain apartheid laws were repealed—Windhoek, for instance, has been officially desegregated for more than three years. And while conditions of 435 required

the repeal of apartheid laws that would interfere with the elections, the mere presence of UNTAG with its Kenyan, Algerian, Fijian and African-American members created a de facto desegregation wherever they went. On independence, the last apartheid laws were automatically repealed.

Apartheid on the ground, however, will be more intransigent. While blacks are now permitted to live in Windhoek proper, few can afford to do so. Segregated education has resulted in generations of functionally illiterate blacks who cannot work in business or government.

In addition, Namibia's tax laws were so discriminatory that even the U.S. State Department noticed. In its 1989 report on human rights in Namibia, the State Department wrote, "A large proportion of the taxes collected from a particular ethnic group stayed with that group, resulting in a gross disparity in the distribution of government revenues. The second-tier administration [ethnically divided regional governments] for the country's 80,000 whites had a budget of \$23 million while the authority for the 650,000 Owambos ... had a budget of \$350,000."

The new government will be faced with the paradox of radically changing the economic conditions that keep the effects of apartheid alive. To attack apartheid for

what it is—an economic system designed to exploit the majority for the benefit of the minority—would require redistribution of the wealth and heavy spending on social services, exactly the programs that would create white flight and bring the wrath of international lenders. No one dares use the expression "trickle down" but that may be the economic policy by default.

Economy of change: While Namibia has an excellent infrastructure of roads and communications, it is a colonial infrastructure designed to meet the needs of South Africa, not Namibia. For instance, Namibia's only international rail link connects with South Africa. The colony served the traditional role of provider of raw materials for the colonizer. As a result, there is virtually no manufacturing in the country. Some 80 percent of Namibia's cattle is exported to South Africa, where it is butchered and packaged for export—including back to Namibia.

The new government is planning to rapidly change this arrangement. Agriculture Minister Gert Hanekom says self-sufficiency in food and cattle farming will be a priority. "I see no reason why we should import food from South Africa," he says. "I want to make Namibia totally independent on vegetables and food supplies." Trade and Industry Minister Ben Amathila says manufacturing will have to be developed to reduce depen-

dency on South Africa and to increase employment.

To calm business fears about a SWAPO government, the liberation-movement-turned-majority-party has been stressing its commitment to a mixed economy. Finance Minister Otto Herrigel at times sounds Reaganesque. "The single most important public finance policy issue will be the balancing of the budget," he says, adding that the government intends to encourage large corporations as well as competition in commercial banking.

Fanuel Tjingaete, a professor of economics at the University of Namibia, sees the development of what he calls "a social market economy, the type of system that is being practiced in West Germany ... that is a conscious effort to create the positive virtues of socialism with the positive aspects of capitalism."

"The government has articulated its policy: it will allow the private sector room to reach out to its potential and contribute to economic growth and development," he says. "The government will intervene only where it is necessary."

But compared to other Third World countries, Namibia is not in bad shape. Total tax revenues last year were \$374 million, about one-third from the general sales tax and one-third from mining companies. The country will start with a deficit of about \$200 million. "By international standards our debt is very low," Tjingaete says. "We are not in the danger zone." Tjingaete's statement implies that the International Monetary Fund is not likely to demand crippling conditions for its loans because Namibia's economy is not a broken machine that needs fixing.

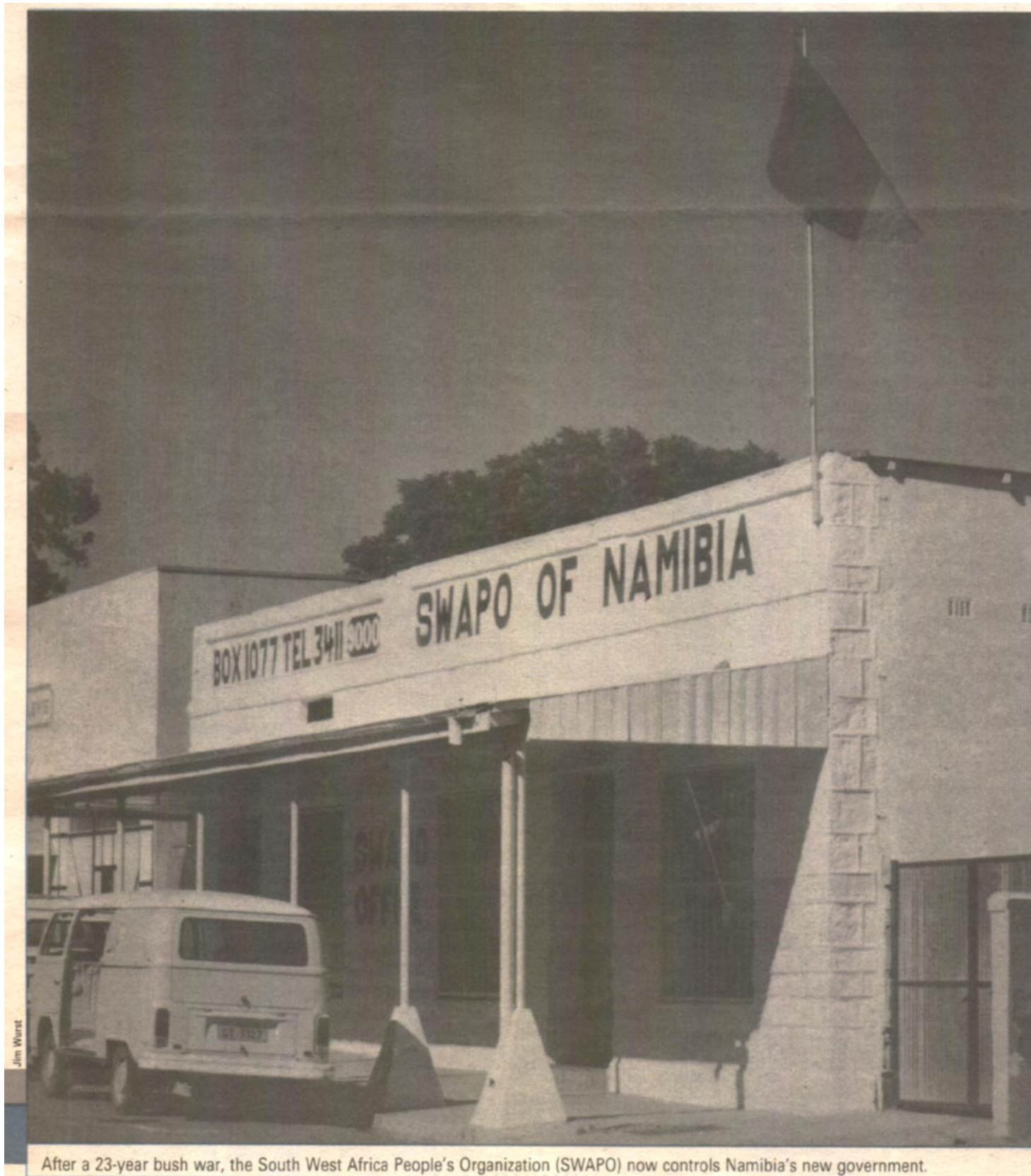
Cash flow: It already appears that someone with money has faith in Namibia's future. New office buildings are going up in central Windhoek, and office and shopping spaces are sold out. According to the city council, the four major projects underway—which are already sold out—will increase rental space by 37 percent. In all, new construction costs could exceed \$80 million.

In building the new economy a great deal of attention will be focused on mining. Tjingaete calls mining, which accounts for 20,000 jobs and 75 to 80 percent of the country's export earnings, "the backbone of the Namibian economy." Three corporations control most of this highly concentrated industry in its three key sectors. Consolidated Diamond Mines controls diamond mining, Tsumeb Corporation Ltd. controls base metals and Rossing Uranium Ltd. controls uranium mining. The bulk of each corporation is in foreign hands, mostly South African.

For decades, the U.N. and other international observers have charged that these corporations worked with South Africa to plunder Namibia's natural resources, removing as much ore as possible before the colony became independent.

The Council for Namibia, which was created by the U.N. to look after the colony's interests before 1974 came into effect, passed a decree in 1974 banning mining and export of natural resources and saying the future government of independent Namibia would have the right to take legal action against anyone ignoring the ban. All three corporations deny the legality of the decree. However, while there is no official government

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After a 23-year bush war, the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) now controls Namibia's new government.

EDITORIAL

IN THESE TIMES

"...with liberty and justice for all"

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Like blacks in this country, Jews, especially those living in Eastern Europe, suffered centuries of oppression, culminating in the Holocaust.

The self-defeating ideologies of racism and anti-Semitism

The United States is a country with a unique multiplicity of ethnic groups mixed more or less together in many parts of the nation, and for that reason it is also a country with a unique multiplicity of ethnic and racial prejudices. For example, significant numbers of Americans seem to believe that Poles or Swedes are dumb, that Italians are gangsters, that the Irish are drunks, that Mexicans are lazy. Among whites there is a hierarchy of prejudice that is roughly related to each national group's time of major immigration. Among whites, those who came first—the English, Germans, French and Dutch—suffer the least prejudice, while those who came during this century—mostly from Eastern and Southern Europe—tend to suffer the most.

But there is prejudice and there is prejudice. In 1982, when Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley ran against George Deukmajian for governor of California, only 5 percent of voters polled said they would not vote for a black, while 17 percent said they would not vote for an Armenian. And in the polls just before the election, Bradley was ahead by about 5 percent. But Bradley, who is an African-American, lost handily to Deukmajian. Clearly, Californians' prejudice against blacks was of a different nature than their prejudice against Armenians. It was something they knew they shouldn't express, but it was also something much more deep-seated, possibly even unconscious.

Anti-Semitism, especially that of African-Americans, has a similar character. Like blacks in this country, Jews, especially those living in Eastern Europe, suffered centuries of oppression, culminating in the Holocaust. This experience as historical victim was the psychological source—at least until the mid-'60s—of a traditional affinity with blacks in this country. In fact, until late in that decade it was not uncommon for American Jews, especially those of Eastern European origin, to refer to gentiles as "white men."

Knowing this history of Jewish oppression therefore makes it difficult for anti-Semitic blacks directly to acknowledge such feelings. But it doesn't prevent them from venting them indirectly.

Two recent expressions—one racist, one anti-Semitic—at New York's City College are particularly telling. First, philosophy professor Michael Levin was censured for having opposed affirmative action on the ground that blacks are naturally inferior. "It has been amply confirmed over the last several decades that on average blacks are significantly less intelligent than whites," Levin has written—a conclusion he bases on the fact that blacks have averaged 15

points lower on IQ tests than whites. Second, professor Leonard Jeffries Jr., chairman of the black studies department, claims that whites are "ice people" who are fundamentally materialistic and intent on domination, while blacks are "sun people" and essentially humanistic. Singling out "rich Jews who financed the development of Europe," Jeffries went on to say that "they also financed the slave trade"—a charge that has gained favor recently among black anti-Semites, especially in Chicago.

The significant thing about both these statements is that they are presented as if they have nothing to do with prejudice. But while the facts are technically true, they prove the opposite of what is claimed. First, as every well-educated person knows—presumably including even philosophy PhDs from Columbia University like Levin—IQ tests do not measure intelligence. They measure acculturation into white middle-class society. Of course, the tests, which equate intelligence with white middle-class culture, are themselves racist in the most basic meaning of the word.

And second, while Jewish bankers undoubtedly financed some of the slave trade during the early years of colonialism, they played less of a role in the promotion of slavery than either the slave traders or colonial slavemasters. In those years Jews were the major bankers in Europe. They financed many mercantile activities, of which the slave trade was one. But they played no special role in that trade. Singling them out as Jeffries does can therefore mean only an underlying prejudice against Jews.

Jeffries' view of Jews was recently echoed in a frightening way by a group of Russian nationalists, brought to the United States as guests of the Bush administration. These nationalists are notorious anti-Semites, yet they deny being anti-Semitic, claiming instead simply to be anti-Zionist. Zionists, they say, were responsible for pogroms, bloody crimes and acts of terror and now threaten Russian culture. One of the nationalists, Stanislav Kunyayev, has written poems about "Jews in the Pentagon" plotting to destroy the Russian people.

But like professor Levin and anti-Semitic blacks, these Russian nationalists insist they are not prejudiced. "It would be ignorant to consider every Jew a Zionist," they say, "just as it would be ignorant to consider every Russian a Communist." Nevertheless, they apparently believe that Jews—in this case in the guise of Zionists—have some special power that makes them more dangerous than other Soviet modernizers—which is the same way Jeffries views Jewish bankers. In both cases Jews are said to epitomize whatever the anti-Semites oppose or dislike.

This was also the way Adolf Hitler saw Jews. The metaphor is different, but Levin approaches blacks in the same way. History is ignored. In its place a rationale is sought for continued hostility or oppression. These attitudes are understandable in Russian nationalists yearning for a return to czarism. They are bizarre and self-defeating in Jews or blacks.

Report on Earth Day: the good, the bad and the future

Earth Day turned out, mostly but not entirely, as expected: a torrent of grotesque corporate PR and almost equally toxic Gaian odes to personal responsibility. It was like being force-fed Werner Erhard to the tune of a Coke commercial.

This is not necessarily to despise the ambitions and efforts of the national Earth Day organizers. Their best hope was probably that the Earth Day anniversary would provoke some consciousness-raising about what actually has happened since the first Earth Day in 1970 (everything got worse) and what needs to be done. The fact that Earth Day became a passing entry on corporate advertising budgets is an inevitable part of the price of admission if you decide to go in for one of these Hands-Across-America affairs.

So far as any decently radical and activist environmental agenda is concerned, Earth Day will have served a useful purpose if it awoke some people to the following:

- The 20 years since Earth Day 1970 saw the U.S. get dirtier, with the price of corporate fouling levied most heavily on the poor and the non-white.

- The main environmental groups are white (see story on page 8), elitist, undemocratic, dominated by conservative trustees, increasingly reliant on corporate subsidy and hog-tied by Washington lawyers and lobbyists.

- An environmental movement that doesn't include among its concerns the biosphere of a black slum in the U.S. and, say, the unavailability of safe water for about 90 percent of the population of El Salvador (and the reason for both conditions) isn't worth joining.

- The time now, over the next year or so, is ripe for the development of a radical environmental organization, hopefully stemming from cooperative discussion among left greens, some Earth First! groups, anti-toxics groups, labor organizations, sections of the Central American solidarity movement and so forth.

Exception to the rule: I had the pleasure of passing Earth Day as an invited speaker at the Milwaukee Green Earth Festival, which was probably one of the best events of this sort across the country because it was consciously directed toward establishing the sort of coalitions and politics gestured at in the preceding paragraph.

Longtime community organizers Rae Vogeler and Mike Wunsch, along with hundreds of volunteer organizers, managed in three and a half months to put together a day that was both fun for the 15,000 people who showed up at one time or another in the area of Wisconsin Avenue and 24th Street and also politically serious.

Milwaukee is one of the most segregated cities in the U.S. A couple of weeks ago black city alderman and former Black Panther Michael McGee raised a national commotion by announcing that two decades of "development" in Milwaukee—a familiar chronicle of sports stadium, sprouting downtown skyline, etc.—had left the black ghetto untouched, and he was now organizing a black militia prepared to use violence to achieve justice (see *In These Times*, April 25).

"We wanted involvement with the black

ASHES & DIAMONDS

By Alexander Cockburn

community," Wunsch told me after the event. They were successful. The neighborhood they chose to have the festival in was on the edge of a black area, and this accessibility got results. "I've been in Milwaukee 11 years," Wunsch remarked, "and no event I've been at, including sports, was as integrated as this."

The organizers kept their distance from corporate donors. Their group accepted a contribution only from Aveda (organic cosmetics, \$5,000), and Wunsch and Vogeler weren't too happy even about that.

The event's \$20,000 price tag was paid for by collections at the procession, proceeds from a Holly Near Claudia Schmidt concert the next day and \$4,000 from the Michigan Foundation. Having invited Mayor John Norquist and Secretary of State Doug LaFollette as speakers early on, they then turned down mainstream politicians who were increasingly eager to jump on board, with Wunsch finally putting the phone down on an importunate aide of Wisconsin's junior senator, millionaire Herb Kohl.

"What we wanted," Wunsch said, "was to get a radical analysis of the causes of pollution, expand the environmental movement beyond its white middle-class base, give grass-roots organizations a good venue for organizing, attract a lot of people and thus get beyond the workshop approach."

They went a long way toward realizing these ambitions, even if, as Wunsch admitted, they were a bit too successful in getting beyond the "workshop approach." Dave Henson, of Environmental Project on Central America (EPOCA), and I found ourselves lecturing to what could be tactfully described as compact audiences in the basement of the Central United Methodist Church, while the masses enjoyed themselves listening to the bands in the nearby park or the Central Park building.

The procession also showed the results of good organizing. There were groups from the United Auto Workers and the Amalgamated Transit Union and brewery workers as well as contingents from the inner city and Native Americans in spectacular gear. I kept hoping for an encounter between a Chippewa wearing a fine wolf head and an Animal Rights chap 50 yards back in the line.

The program had good politics too, cautioning people against Pogoism ("We've met the enemy and they are Us"), and reminding people that most of the mess is made by Them—in other words, corporations for whom filth is an integral part of the beefier bottom line.

So in Milwaukee they tried to show the connections between the environmental

and the social, and people ambled cheerfully from table to table—Jobs with Peace, Mobilization for Survival, Greenpeace, housing groups—to see the programs and strategies being offered.

The New York difference: Contrast this with what went on in New York, as described by two of my *Nation* colleagues, Peter Rothberg and JoAnn Wypijewski. Peter went to the huge gathering in Central Park and JoAnn to the action to shut down Wall Street on April 23, the morning after Earth Day.

The main Earth Day ceremonies in New York turned out to have consisted primarily of an "eco-fair" running along Sixth Avenue from 42nd Street to 59th Street and a rally in Central Park featuring bigwigs from the music, political and show business worlds. The tone of the entire event was apolitical and resolutely Pogoistic. Lots about recycl-

How do you get people behind some program to save the atmosphere when you talk about ozone and they're living in a crummy apartment, choking on the car exhaust from the street below and have nowhere to escape to?

ing, with individual accountability stressed and corporate accountability ignored.

Many corporations, in fact, had tables, displays and PR teams out in force. Con Edison, Alpha Paper and General Motors all had prominent exhibitions advertising their awareness of environmental peril. All talked of the imperative of recycling and conservation of resources. A friend of Peter's asked a Con Ed spokesman about the contradiction posed by a company in the business of selling energy simultaneously proclaiming the need to conserve (which its PR literature does). "There's no contradiction," the flack chirped. "It's just a matter of being responsible and cleaning up the environment."

Almost every mainstream environmental group had tables: Greenpeace, the Sierra Club, the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) and New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG) were all very visible. The principal focus of EDF and NYPIRG's literature and displays was recycling, with sermons on what the individual could do. Both pressed the importance of political lobbying.

If you really want to help the environment, someone from NYPIRG told Peter, lobby your Congress member to support the Clean Air Act. When he asked an EDF spokesman about the potential perils of corporate sponsorship of the environmental movement, he was told he was being unfair and biased because "some corporations are doing really good things." When Peter's friend put a similar question to someone from NYPIRG, he was told that corporate sponsorship was too controversial a topic for the spokesman to comment on and was asked not to bother other NYPIRGers with such questions.

The most striking thing about New York's event was its composition. Young wealthy whites dominated. The tone was reminiscent of a huge fraternity party, especially when one got to the park, with beer and marijuana in flagrant abundance. The vast majority of people had obviously come to drink beer and listen to music. The crowd intermittently booed the speakers. When actress Susan Sarandon asked the crowd, "Why are we here today?" many in the crowd could be heard bellowing in response, "For the music." They left behind a horrible mess of beer bottles, cigarette butts and candy wrappers.

In tune with the incredible "whiteness" of the crowd, the performers chosen were sure to appeal to white audiences. The Roches, Hall and Oates, the B-52s and Edie Brickell all have predominantly white audiences, and the only black performer, Ben E. King, played for all of eight minutes. Peter says Earth Day was the "whitest event I've ever been to in NYC except for a Rangers hockey game I took in a few years back."

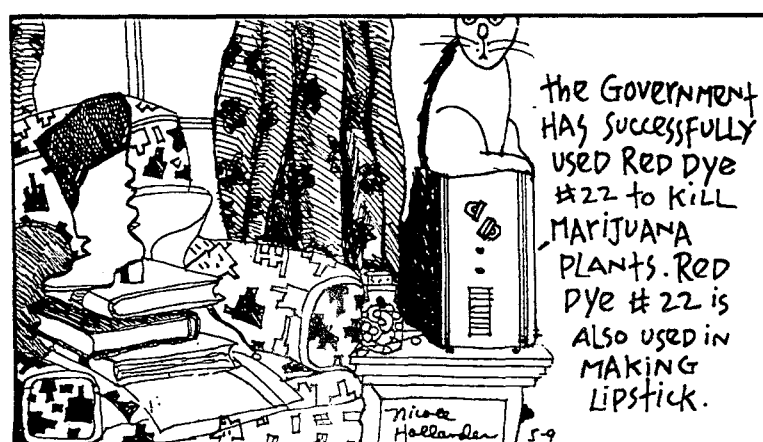
On April 22 JoAnn went to a local Earth Day event on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. On either side of 4th Street between Avenues C and D, in the heart of an extremely depressed and drug-ridden district where lots nearby are littered with burned-out cars, old sofas, single shows and the other familiar indicators of social disarray, there are two community gardens. One, an exceptionally peaceful and well-designed place called Paroque de Tranquilidad, and the other a sort of work in progress.

Those gardens and others like them in the Lower East Side are shepherded to some extent by a group called the Green Guerrillas, and it is this group that held the event—basically a day for tree planting, for recognizing the gardeners who work, for interesting others who might want to garden and for passing out such useful information as details about alternatives to plastic diapers.

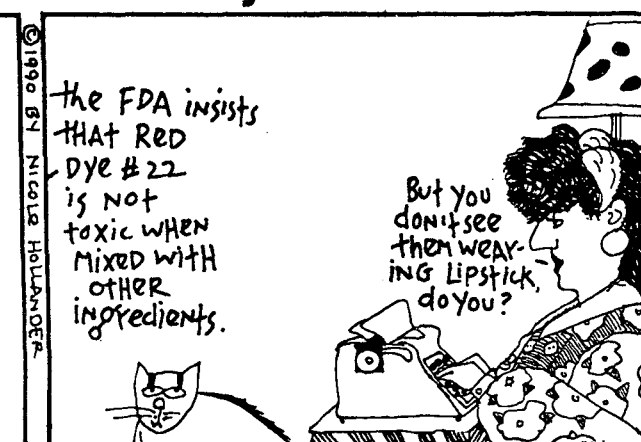
In the context of a neighborhood where lots of people hang out on the street, especially in the summer when their apartments become too hot, this type of street event—casual, with live jazz by a group of teenagers of various ethnic origin, ad-hoc games and kite making for kids—seemed appropriate,

Continued on following page

SYLVIA



by Nicole Hollander



Earth Day

Continued from preceding page
and in that same context so did its cause for celebration: the creation of gardens in an otherwise fairly hostile environment. There was no pretense about saving the world, only the recognition that on the most basic level, the neighborhood people were doing something collectively that improved the actual conditions of life and that had at least a marginal ecological benefit.

The larger questions seemed to be more understood than raised: in a neighborhood full of poor people, the notion of ecology is best expressed in something as solid as a garden, and the need and importance of that garden cannot be separated from the other vital things on the neighborhood's agenda—housing, jobs, urban redevelopment. Half the spectators and tree planters were black or Hispanic. Of course, the matter of the urban environment—what it is, how it can be made less alienating—was not very high on the agenda of the main Earth Day events (if there at all). But how do you get people behind some program to save the atmosphere, say, when you talk about ozone and they're living in a crummy apartment, choking on the car and truck exhaust from the street below and have nowhere to escape to?

The Wall Street action promised more

than it delivered. Weeks ago the organizers of the event came out with a 64-page "Action Handbook," typeset, with illustrations, essays by prominent people, a reading list in the back, an outline of the day's events and a sizable list of contact numbers. This was selling for \$1, and along with this there were posters advertising the action. The "endorsers" included EPOCA, Mobilization for Survival, National Toxics Campaign, Love Canal Homeowners Association, War Resisters League, Clamshell Alliance, Green groups from throughout New England, Vermont Pledge of Resistance—in other words, a lot of folks who have experience in direct actions. There were also various Earth First! contingents and collectives like Red Balloon, groups of anarchist friends.

The difficulty seems to have been that the effort to close down Wall Street was scheduled to begin at 6 a.m., at which time about 1,000 demonstrators emerged from the subways to be confronted by overwhelming police force. Even by the time JoAnn arrived, at about 10 a.m., there were cops everywhere—at the subway station entrances, in front of every corporate building, lining the streets on foot and on horseback, sitting in police cars and special police vans, sitting even in buses apparently hired for the occasion. Against the weight of such force, it was impossible to carry out any of the demonstrat-

ors' planned strategies, and arrests of more than 200 people commenced at about 7 a.m. By about 12:30 p.m., people released from jail emerged to find a couple of thousand new arrivals for a rally at the Federal Building, with crowds of Wall Streeters on hand to observe.

So perhaps it was the early hour that prevented large numbers from participating at the outset. But some at the demo challenge the view that there had been careful advance coordination. JoAnn talked to a fellow who said that at the planning meeting he attended the night before—which he said seemed to him as if it were one of very few such meetings held—the attitude was "Whatever your affinity group wants to do, that's cool." No leaders, therefore no organization. A group of people who had come down from Ohio apparently said, "We're just five people from Ohio; what can we do?"

After the early waves of arrests, when the best-organized groups were in jail, the demonstration had more the timbre of an anarchist frolic, with people tearing up dollar bills, shouting "Jump" to those peering out of office windows—essentially doing nothing likely to impress Wall Streeters with a sense that this was a serious opposition to their way of life.

The anti-AIDS group ACT-UP disrupted the Stock Exchange last year. They had a highly

orchestrated sit-in, and when that was broken up by the police, they infiltrated number of well-dressed men with faked IDs into the building, who then chained themselves to fixtures and berated the corporate traders for the actions of their company. When they took to St. Patrick's Cathedral and interrupted the Mass, that too was a highly organized action. ACT-UP constantly passes self-criticism about whether it's being too white, too male, too hierarchical, etc., but in the end it drafts a plan, organizes people into groups and they know what their movements are to be.

From the police presence on Wall Street, it's clear that you can still scare the ruling groups with a good come on, but when you don't deliver, you've done more than just hold a disappointing demonstration. You've shown that there's no real reason for them to be scared next time, or any time.

That was the bottom line of Earth Day. Power, in the form of powerful people as opposed to empowered people, wasn't scared at all. George Bush was so unscared that he actually took the opportunity of his Earth Day message to herald his plan to empower the oil companies to start drilling off the coast of California.

Let's organize so they're scared by the time another "Earth Day" rolls around. ■
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Namibia

Continued from page 13

policy, it appears the new government will not test the decree's validity, preferring to work with the corporations rather than against them.

Namibia's fishing industry also suffers from exploitation. A 1989 U.N. report said that after a peak catch of almost 1.4 million tons of fish in 1968, the catch "has drastically declined to an average level of 90,000 tons per annum, a classic case of depletion through over-exploitation." Because Namibia did not have its own government, and South Africa's authority was not internationally recognized, Namibia is one of the few countries in the world without a 200-nautical-mile exclusion zone to protect its fishing waters. This opportunity was exploited by the International Commission for South-East Atlantic Fisheries (ICSEAF), whose members overfished Namibian waters because they lacked any kind of policing. While Nujoma says Namibia plans to give "highest priority" to establishing 200-nautical-mile limit, there is no navy or coast guard to enforce that limit or quotas on catches.

Disputed territory: In any discussion of Namibia's economy, Walvis Bay must be considered. This enclave midway up the Atlantic coast is vital to the security, even the sovereignty, of Namibia. Because the bay was a British colony—and not German, as was the rest of Namibia—South Africa claims the area is not part of the territorial mandate, and thus not a part of Namibia. No one, least of all the Namibians who specified Walvis Bay as Namibian territory in the new constitution, accepts the claim that the bay is part of South Africa.

But the South African flag still flies over the bay, and to reach the enclave from Swakopmund, 30 kilometers away, travelers must pass through a passport control point. Walvis Bay is Namibia's only deep-water port, though which virtually all goods imported or exported must pass. Pretoria maintains a light-infantry battalion of 1,700 troops there—"one hard-hitting mobile force able

to operate anywhere," its commandant says—but the naval base is being dismantled.

While there are obvious economic reasons for holding onto Walvis Bay, University of Namibia political science professor Gerard Töttemeyer says, "It's more for psychological reasons that they stay on in Walvis Bay... [Pretoria] can say to the whites, 'See, we are still very much represented in Namibia.'" While he says South Africa would not hesitate to intervene in Namibia if it felt its interests were threatened, cooling tensions, the withdrawal of Cuba from Angola and the unbanning of the African National Congress—making it unlikely that Namibia would allow ANC guerrillas to train in the country—make the possibility remote that Windhoek would give the SADF any pretext to intervene.

The conflicting claims have the bizarre effect of Namibia calling for the lifting of sanctions against South Africa—at least in the case of the port. Nujoma wrote to the U.N. in March requesting the lifting of economic sanctions against Namibia, including Walvis Bay, and the oil embargo against the bay. "From March 21, Walvis Bay should be recognized as the bona fide port of entry to Namibia for refined oil products and other goods," he wrote. The U.N. has not lifted the embargo.

For decades, South Africa used Namibia as a testing ground for its apartheid policies. Now the process is being turned on its head. Namibia has become the testing ground for democracy that could open the way to change in South Africa. As Gwen Lister, editor of *The Namibian* newspaper, writes, "Apart from setting an example to the skeptics in Namibia itself... [South Africans] have seen for themselves how things proceeded smoothly in Namibia and, having allowed 435 to go ahead in this country, now feel they have the courage to try a few reforms themselves." □

Jim Wurst specializes in United Nations and international-security issues. He was recently in Namibia on a grant from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

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By John Russo

THE AMERICAN LABOR MOVEMENT HAS long had an uneasy relationship with the Catholic Church. In labor's view, Catholic social teaching often conflicted with union membership's needs, while on a day-to-day level, Church support of union-organizing efforts was inconsistent. But in 1986, with the publication of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops' pastoral letter on Catholic social teaching entitled "Economic Justice for All," things took a turn for the better. Church-union relations had been improving for 30 years, but the 1986 pastoral letter seemed definitively to place labor—not capital—at the center of the church's concerns. The bishops unequivocally supported the rights of workers to form unions and "firmly opposed organizing efforts, such as those regrettably now seen in this country, to break existing unions and prevent workers from organizing."

Only four years into this new relationship, however, tensions between labor and the church are again high—in part because of the debate over pro-choice resolutions before the AFL-CIO executive committee, and in part because of strong church opposition to union-organizing efforts at Catholic institutions.

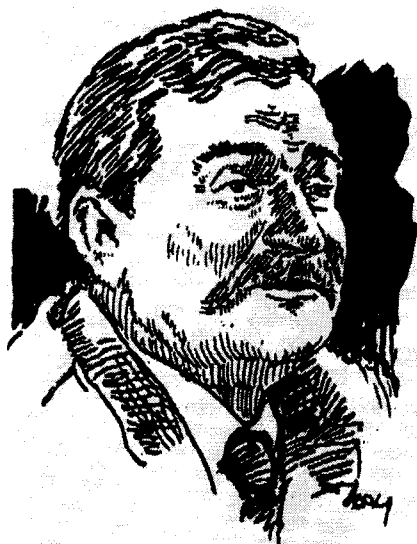
The AFL-CIO and pro-choice: For 17 years the AFL-CIO has had a "no position" policy on abortion. But changing demographics within the labor movement have resulted in greater sensitivity by union leaders about women and minorities. This new concern was reflected at the AFL-CIO convention in November when the delegates referred six pro-choice resolutions to its executive committee with instructions to develop a new federation policy for its 90 union affiliates. Using the resolutions as a guideline, the executive committee has begun formulating its policy statement in preparation for its meeting next month.

The pro-choice resolutions proposed that the AFL-CIO oppose efforts by politicians and judges to restrict reproductive choice and that the federation work for legislation that would overturn *Webster vs. Reproductive Health Services* and against state legislation to restrict reproductive freedom. In addition, they would commit the union to support women's rights to legal abortion and access to health care and family-planning services, including prenatal health care, regardless of ability to pay.

These pro-choice policy proposals by the 14-million-member federation sent shock waves through the Catholic hierarchy and the National Right to Life Committee (NRLC). In response the NRLC issued a strong *Legislative Alert* to all Catholic diocese warning that the passage of a resolution supporting pro-choice will "unleash the AFL-CIO's massive organizational resources in support of the pro-abortion cause." According to the NRLC, this would include AFL-CIO staff lobbying in support of pro-abortion legislation and use of its "political apparatus" to defeat pro-life congressmen or to pressure them into abandoning pro-life positions.

The *Legislative Alert* and lobbying materials have been disseminated to all U.S. Catholic diocese. Church leaders have justified the use of the diocesan network on the ground that the "no position" policy by the

Tensions run high again between unions, Catholics



IF RADICAL PRO-ABORTION FEMINISTS HAVE THEIR WAY, EVEN LECH WALESA COULDN'T BE ENDORSED FOR POLITICAL OFFICE IN 1990.

Detail of a poster distributed by the Ohio Right to Life Society Educational Fund.

AFL-CIO indirectly supports Catholic teaching on abortion.

And NLRC lobbying efforts have begun to show results. Writing in the *Catholic Exponent*, Monsignor George G. Higgins, the dean of Catholic labor scholars, has suggested that if the AFL-CIO reverses its neutrality position, "it will suffer dire consequences" and will risk alienating large segments of its membership at a time when it needs unity and solidarity. Cardinal John O'Connor of New York has urged in his weekly column in the archdiocese newsletter that the AFL-CIO reject the abortion resolutions that have been pushed under the guise of pro-choice. Clearly, when it comes to Catholic teaching on abortion, the Catholic hierarchy is only too willing to provide moral and political leadership to their flock.

Catholic cemetery workers: Enforcing Catholic social teaching in other areas such as organizing unions in Catholic institutions (schools, hospitals, nursing homes and cemeteries) is, however, another story. In such cases, the church hierarchy's moral and ethical leadership and support for unions and other social groups dissolves.

The experience of the Catholic Cemetery Workers of Los Angeles (CCWLA) is an example of this gap between Catholic rhetoric on unions and church officials' behavior. In April 1988, CCWLA requested organizing assistance from the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union (ACTWU) after cemetery workers discovered that their annual Christmas bonus had been discontinued and that a deceased employee's life insurance had been cancelled. The rationale given to employees was that the church needed the money to pay for the pope's visit to Los Angeles in 1988.

Within two months, 85 percent of the CCWLA had signed authorization cards and ACTWU requested union recognition from the archdiocese and its archbishop, Roger Mahony. Based on his past support of union organizing activities, especially those of the United Farmworkers of America, ACTWU had every reason to believe that Mahony would grant union recognition. They were mistaken.

The archbishop denied the request but directed ACTWU to seek a National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) election. Then, at the

NLRB hearing, the archdiocese claimed that the CCWLA were "religious workers" over whom the NLRB had no jurisdiction.

After the NLRB agreed with the archdiocese, the ACTWU petitioned Mahony for an independent election supervised by a neutral third party. This incensed Mahony, who charged that ACTWU had forced employees to sign authorization cards. "I've been around unions enough to know how you get people to sign cards," Mahony told the *Los Angeles Times*. "You have a big rally, serve a lot of food and drink and get people ... to sign cards." Angered by the archbishop's remarks and aware that they would be used by anti-union employees in other organizing efforts, CCWLA and ACTWU asked for public letters of support from other labor and community groups.

With community pressure building, an embarrassed archbishop—citing Catholic social teaching—finally directed the archdiocese to seek the third-party election the union had proposed. In November 1988, the archdiocese and CCWLA reached an agreement to have a representation election in January 1989 conducted by the California State Mediation and Conciliation Services.

But the archdiocese hadn't given in. Instead they hired Carlos Restrepo, a notorious anti-union consultant, to coordinate its anti-union campaign. Restrepo helped organize a "company union" and engaged in numerous union-avoidance strategies. Even so, on Feb. 8, 1989, a narrow majority of cemetery workers voted to be represented by ACTWU. Successful in cutting union support, Restrepo and the archdiocese delayed negotiations and initiated a campaign to overturn the election.

The archdiocese demanded an arbitration of its election objections, but when the union agreed, the archdiocese sought three separate delays, during which it fired several union supporters for "conduct that is inconsistent with the work and mission of the sacred ministry of Catholic cemeteries." And Mahony became more involved in the anti-union campaign. According to *Time* magazine, the archbishop was given a \$400,000 jet-powered helicopter by "anonymous businessmen" to fly to the various cemeteries to give anti-union captive-audiences speeches.

In December, an arbitrator finally ruled that the union election was valid, and on Jan. 4, 1990—almost two years after the organizing drive started—the cemetery workers began negotiations with the Catholic Diocese of Los Angeles. Three weeks later, however, the archdiocese terminated negotiations and called for another election. Almost immediately another "election" was held without ACTWU participation. This time the cemetery workers voted for "no union." ACTWU is currently contesting its validity.

Mahony's actions raise serious questions about adherence to Catholic social teaching as well as his personal motivation. Many labor unionists in California have suggested that Mahony needs conservative support in order to become a cardinal in the Catholic Church. What better way to win conservative support and a red hat than by union bashing?

St. Elizabeth's Hospital: A similar situation has developed at St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Youngstown, Ohio. The Youngstown Diocese is under the direction of Bishop James Malone, formerly president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and the man largely responsible for the 1986 pastoral letter.

As a result of changes in employment conditions and declining morale, employees at St. Elizabeth's Hospital have considered organizing a union. To thwart them before their efforts got off the ground in the spring of 1989, the hospital administration, the Sisters of Humility, hired Independence, Mo.-based Management Science Associates (MSA) as employee-relations consultants.

According to the AFL-CIO's *Reports on Union-Busters*, MSA specializes in "preventative labor relations," or the use of applied psychology and sophisticated attitudinal surveys to defeat union-organizing efforts.

As part of their services, MSA provides extensive supervisory training. At St. Elizabeth's, MSA organized training seminars for supervisors using their 160-page standard text, *Positive Employee Relations and Union Free Management: A Health Care Supervisor's Manual for Improving Employee Relations and Maintaining Non-Union Status*.

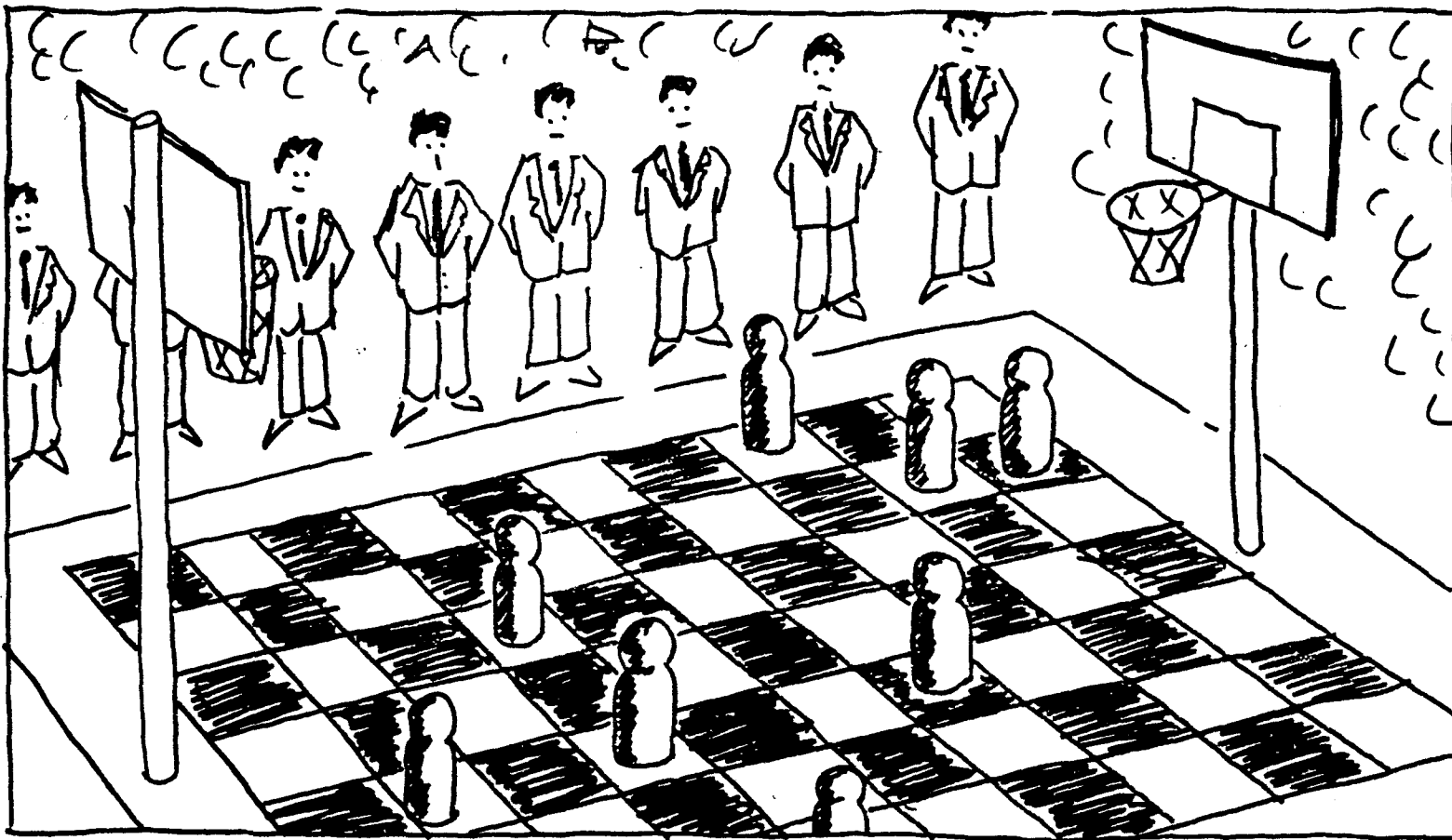
While Malone has no control over the actual running of the hospital, it is in his diocese and he has not chosen to speak out or exert his moral authority concerning violations of both the intent and spirit of the pastoral letter that he helped draft.

Likewise other church leaders, including a pope who claims affinity with the working class, have not spoken out concerning the actions of Catholic institutions that, like the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, openly engage in anti-union activity.

To many in the religious labor community, the silence indicates a continued hypocrisy and situational ethics practiced by the church hierarchy in regard to Catholic social teaching. Others merely see the church leaders as practicing the same "cafeteria Catholicism" that they so often complain about to their parishioners. That is, they pick and choose which church doctrines to live by. They don't perform abortions at Catholic hospitals in Los Angeles or Youngstown because of Catholic social teaching, but these same church leaders are only too willing to abort those who seek to improve labor and human rights.

John Russo is director of the labor studies program at Youngstown State University.

LIFE IN THE U.S.



CBS: Corporate Bureaucratized Sports

By Kenneth W. Graham Jr.

AFTER YEARS OF HEARING basketball fans complain about him, I got my first chance to see Brent Musburger at work shortly before he got his pink slip from CBS. Watching him work the Loyola Marymount-Alabama game in the NCAA tournament made it easy to see why basketball fans hate Musburger and his bosses and the network ought to have loved him.

Contrary to what fans in other parts of the country often say, Musburger is not biased against our teams because his own loyalties are in the (Big) East. Instead, Musburger is a partisan of "bureaucratized" sports who favors basketball teams that conform to the bureaucratic ideal and dislikes those that do not. Teams in the East more nearly conform to that model than do those in the West.

For those unfamiliar with the term, the epitome of bureaucratized sport is the National Football League. Professional football is less

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a game played on the field by athletes and more an event engineered by technicians on the

Bureaucratized basketball coaches control their players through specialization and de-skilling.

sidelines and in the press box. Players are supposed to be automata who carry out orders sent down

the chain of command by the generals of the sport.

The coach's game: I had not realized how far basketball had become infected with this view until I heard Musburger keep repeating during the LMU-Alabama game "what a wonderful job Wimp Sander-son is doing defending Loyola Marymount." It took me a few minutes to figure out that the wimpy one was not a player on the floor but the scowling figure strutting the sidelines, barking orders to the players like a berserk Hessian. His "wonderful defense" consisted of forbidding his players to do anything on offense.

By contrast, two days later Nevada Las Vegas played defense against LMU. Instead of the "dog in the manger" defense so praised by Musburger, the Rebel players were blocking shots, stealing passes, knocking the ball loose under the basket and rebounding well. But

Musburger had nothing to say about "Tarkanian's great defense," despite the fact that the UNLV coach's team won by 30 points. This is probably because it is hard to glorify a coach as a CEO when he sits on the sidelines sucking a towel, as is Tarkanian's habit.

Musburger's views are more striking if you are old enough to remember when the perfect basketball team was thought to be a group of individuals cooperating to coordinate their play and the coach was a person who taught them the requisite skills. Today, when the concept of "teamwork" has been so corrupted by managerial mandarins, people seem to find it easy to think of the coach as the chairman of the board and a chain gang as the perfect team.

For Musburger, a good college coach is a capitalist entrepreneur who is the team's real "owner," despite its nominal connection with some academic institution. The coach must first convince players to invest their talents in his business. He must then separate ownership of these assets from control in a way that makes the players less like shareholders and more like workers with an employee stock-ownership plan.

Like his corporate counterpart, the bureaucratized basketball coach controls the workers through a combination of specialization and de-skilling. On the schoolyard and in the rulebook, players are equal. But in bureaucratized basketball the players are turned into "point guards" and "power forwards" and taught only the skills needed to perform these specialized roles. Players are prodded to conform to this control by the presence on the bench

of a reserve pool of unemployed workers eager to scab.

Taking bad shots: It is easy to spot a bureaucratized basketball team. Typically it will have more white-collar types on the bench than blue-collar workers on the floor. Players on such teams are never said to make "mistakes," because this would imply that they make decisions. Instead, players take "bad shots" or "fail to execute." Tellingly, the worst thing that can be said about a bureaucratized basketball player is that he is "playing out of control."

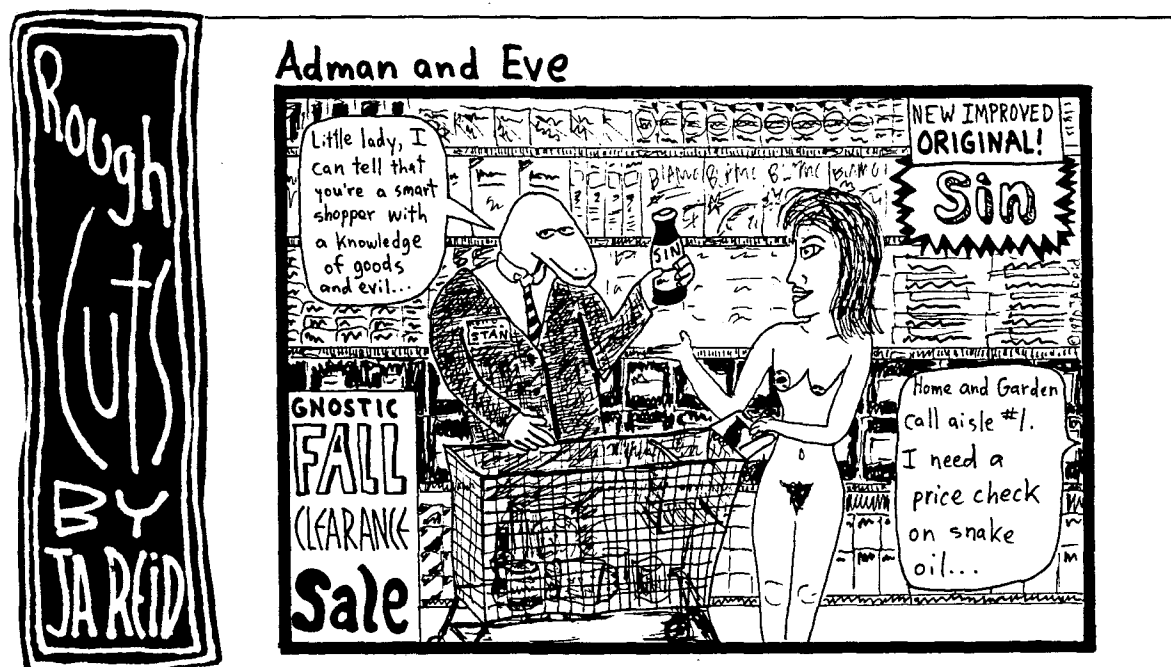
Musburger's fondness for bureaucratic basketball explains his prejudices. He does not dislike Nolan Richardson and Billy Tubbs because they are from Arkansas and Oklahoma. He disapproves of them and their teams because they do not conform to the bureaucratic norm. The teams are perpetually "out of control." Players shoot even though they are not "shooting guards" and rebound even though they are not "power forwards."

By the axioms of bureaucratized basketball, if the players are out of control, the only way the team can win is to have more talent than the opposition. This means that the best that can be said of the coach is that he is "a good recruiter." In other words, the coach is more like a junk-bond salesman than a corporate president. And as Michael Milken learned the hard way, admiration for salesmanship always carries suspicions concerning methods. It seldom occurs to the bureaucratic mind that players might be lured to a non-bureaucratic team by improved working conditions rather than under-the-table payments.

Musburger is fond of bureaucratic basketball because it has been good to him. One of the delusions of the bureaucratic mind is that if everything can be controlled, everything can be explained, if necessary by some outside consultant like Musburger. But when UNLV defeats Loyola Marymount by 30 points, no explanation is necessary. When LMU defeats Michigan by 30 points, no explanation is possible. This leaves Musburger nothing to do except act as propagandist for bureaucratized basketball.

What the executives at CBS have failed to understand is that it is Musburger's bureaucratic propensities that have made college basketball so popular. MBAs who couldn't shoot a free throw, much less slam dunk, can identify with the coach and blame the players for defeat. Working stiffs can secretly exult when players win even when the experts tell them it is impossible. Advertisers can be happy because their advertising dollars are selling not only the product but a debased notion of cooperation that saps democratic opposition to their power. ■

Kenneth W. Graham Jr. is a longtime b-ball player.



Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer
Directed by John McNaughton

By Patrick Z. McGavin

THE CLASSIFICATIONS WE ASSIGN movies fundamentally restrict the way we approach them. A few more films like John McNaughton's notorious *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* could significantly change our perception of horror movies. *Henry* is a brutal, unnerving foray inside a killer's lost, twisted soul. Like Joseph Ruben's 1987 classic *The Stepfather*, *Henry* would be impossible to admire if it wasn't so exceedingly well-made. The film not only boldly re-imagines the narrow conventions of "horror" but alters our received notions of form and subject.

Following a nine-month run as a midnight offering at Chicago's Music Box Theater, the film's tortured odyssey of failed distribution deals, ratings controversy and the ipso facto censorship of the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) has come full circle. Opening commercially for a specialized "art house" booking in March following a January test run in Boston, *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* is where it belongs: on the big screen, where the audience can judge its considerable merits.

Shot four years ago in Chicago in 28 days on 16mm film for a mere \$112,000, the film was commissioned by an Oak Forrest, Ill., company, MPI Video, best known for its macabre series *Faces of Death*. What that company's two founders, Waleed B. Ali and Malik B. Ali, wanted was a conventional horror film. What McNaughton, an unknown writer and director working on his first feature, delivered was a thematically imposing, darkly stylized work that has critics comparing him favorably to such artists as John Cassavetes and Fritz Lang.

Henry is loosely based on the confessions (since recanted) of serial killer Henry Lee Lucas. Almost instantly you sense something different about the film, a liberation from its horror roots. Shot documentary-style, the structure of this 83-minute film is radical, composed of long takes, a superb use of blackouts, and a pacing that's distinctly antithetical to the slasher film.

Said and done: Henry (Michael Rooker), a hulking, awkward man who's almost childlike, kills with brutal efficiency and shows no remorse. He selects his victims randomly, without motive. McNaughton wrote the script with Richard Fire, and part of the film's considerable strength is a refusal to explain Henry's motives. It's quite possible Henry's a pathological liar. One wonders if he really killed his mother, a whore who made him dress up in girls' clothes and watch while she turned tricks. "It ain't what she done;

Blood simpleton: attack of the killer B-movie



Michael Rooker as *Henry*—a disturbing, deadpan film about a serial killer that cuts through slasher-film genre boundaries.

it's how she done it," he says.

Henry is a rootless ex-con who works dead-end jobs and lives in a seedy apartment in Chicago's Uptown neighborhood with Otis (Tom Towles), a former cellmate. When Otis' sister Becky (Tracy Arnold) turns up, fleeing her violent husband, she begins to fall for Henry. With its intimations of incest, unrequited homosexual desire and necrophilia, *Henry* uses violence as compensation for sexual dissatisfaction. Indeed, Otis is drawn into Henry's murderous spree when he's rejected by a high school football player to whom he sells dope. "I want to kill somebody," Otis shrieks. "Let's me and you go for a ride, Otis," Henry tells him.

Gritty and cerebral: McNaughton has a remarkable use of the zoom and focal lengths that establish character and mood, highlighting the constantly shifting relationships of the three leads. The two killers are outcasts, so far removed from any expected notion of responsibility that killing becomes their only form of being. At once gritty and cerebral, *Henry* is also almost diabolically funny. The dialogue is deadpan. Otis: "Where are you going?" Henry: "Nowhere. You wanna come?"

In the film's most disquieting section, Henry and Otis invade a suburban home, killing and sodomizing a woman, her husband and 12-year-old son. We view the scene not directly but later on a videotape that Henry has made with a stolen camcorder. This frightening parody of voyeurism implicates the audience in the horror, removing any sense of

artifice or distance. This is masterly filmmaking, even if the material is repellent. McNaughton doesn't sensationalize the subject—most of the carnage is off-camera. He presents a cool, almost dispassionate view of the irredeemable and horrifying.

Genre inversion: To be sure, *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* is for discerning tastes, but as both an inversion of genre and a brazenly original debut work, it commands attention.

"I didn't make this film for cineastes or aesthetes," says McNaughton, the 41-year-old co-writer, producer and director. "From the start I imagined this film would have a regular, middle audience." That the film has *any* audience is no small achievement on McNaughton's part. Originally shown in a video sidebar at the 1986 Chicago International Film Festival, Vestron Pictures was prepared to buy distribution and video rights from MPI. "But when they discovered it was based in part on Henry Lee Lucas, their lawyers wanted us to take out errors and omission insurance," says McNaughton. "It took eight and a half months to negotiate, and the lawyers ended up making twice as much as I did to write, produce and direct the film."

Psychotic labyrinth: By then Vestron was involved in a protracted legal battle with Hemdale Film Corp. over the video rights to *Platoon* and *Hoosiers*, and interest in *Henry* had receded. Atlantic Entertainment, an independent British distributor, bid for the film within hours of the collapsed Vestron deal. "They were going to release

it to 400 to 600 theaters," says McNaughton. In October 1987, *Henry* was submitted to the ratings classification board, and when the MPAA returned with an unreleasable X rating, executives at Atlantic told McNaughton: "We're not going to take this picture out."

FILM

With *Henry* in limbo, McNaughton directed his second film, *The Borrower*, a science-fiction satire he wrote with Fire, starring Rae Dawn Chong and Towles. Budgeted at \$2 million, the Machiavellian working conditions set off internecine warfare among McNaughton, his crew and the constantly changing executives of Atlantic Entertainment, who were staving off Chapter 11 proceedings. Scheduled for world premiere at the 1989 Chicago International Film Festival, the film was mysteriously dropped from the schedule when the film's chief financier, Lou Horowitz, objected to the film being seen. "The situation," says McNaughton, "is not without humor. Like *Henry*, the film will be seen when its time comes."

The breakthrough for *Henry*'s release was the 1989 Telluride Film Festival, where Errol Morris, a guest programmer, slotted the film for two screenings. "Here was Morris, this Cambridge intellectual, screening our film and I don't think anyone was quite prepared," says McNaughton. At once the film was both applauded and reviled, and suffered some walkouts. But whatever the response, this showcase event revealed the depths of McNaughton's

artistry. "It was a warm sort of atmosphere ... that dispelled the myth that we were depraved lunatics," he says.

Henry was quickly entered into the Boston Film Festival ("Toronto turned us down twice"). The film's next suitor, IFEX, announced they were distributing the film, but it was aborted when the Ali brothers refused the terms of the agreement. The brothers finally settled on Greycat Films, a start-up Las Vegas distributor run by David Whitten and Suzanne Bowers Whitten, two former Vestron executives. The receipts on the film's isolated opening so far are encouraging. They've also chosen to release the film unrated; when the MPAA rating came down three years ago, the board refused to cite specific moments, claiming the X was for overall tone.

For a film shot on a virtually nonexistent budget, what's impressive is how good it looks. Cinematographer Charlie Lieberman's evocative Chicago location work and crisp framing and cutting are particularly noteworthy; Elena Maganini's editing is sharp and precise.

McNaughton has three other projects he's eager to film: William Burroughs' *The Last Works of Dutch Schultz*, an adaptation of Robert Edmond Alter's *Carny Kill* called *Neverland*, and an autobiographical screenplay, *Step Right Up*, based on McNaughton's experiences in a carnival. And after waking from his distribution-deal nightmare, he's eager for work, out to prove *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* was no fluke. **Patrick Z. McGavin** is a writer and critic in Chicago.

Making Peace With the Planet

By Barry Commoner
Pantheon, 292 pp., \$19.95

By Robert Schaeffer

PREVENTION IS THE ONLY CURE for what ails the environment. That's the message the good doctor Barry Commoner is spreading as he travels across the U.S. promoting his latest book, *Making Peace With the Planet*. Government attempts to regulate industry, and thereby "control" pollution, are doomed to fail, says Commoner. The only way to eliminate pollution is to prevent it from being produced in the first place. And that can be accomplished only by changing the way things are made, by transforming the technology of pollution-generating factories and farms.

This conclusion seems entirely obvious. But it needs to be said, because neither government regulators nor most environmental groups subscribe to this view. Instead, they believe that because pollution is only an unintentional by-product of industrial society it can be reduced and its impact minimized by regulating, modifying and controlling existing technologies. So they pass clean air and water legislation, attach scrubbers to power plants and catalytic converters to cars, conduct risk assessments, establish standards and set goals for the reduction of pollution in the not-too-distant future.

Yet this enormous amount of well-meaning legislation, bureaucratic paperwork and economic expense has failed to reduce pollution significantly. Commoner points out that 20 years after the first Earth Day, major air pollutants have been reduced only 15 to 20 percent and that the rate of improvement has actually slowed of late. Further remedial action, even by a more energetic U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, is unlikely to improve matters, and pollution-reduction goals will continue to recede over the horizon.

Progress report: There has, however, been some progress. The levels of DDT, PCB, mercury and strontium 90 in the environment have been reduced substantially, by 70 percent or more, and airborne lead has fallen to only 10 percent of its 1975 level. Commoner points out that these chemical pollutants were reduced only because their production was banned. Drastic as this may seem, it did not bring industrial society to a grinding halt. Food is still produced, though now without DDT, and cars continue to run, though now without leaded gasoline. Instead of tinkering with the technologies that produced these pollutants, substitute technologies were found or adopted.

The lesson Commoner draws from this is that it is both possible and desirable to adopt a preventative approach to environmental

problems. If there is a problem, the technology itself must be reshaped and benign substitutes found. Commoner notes that most contemporary problems are the products of technological changes that were introduced after World War II, changes that were introduced not because they were superior or necessary but because they were more profitable than existing or alternative clean technologies.

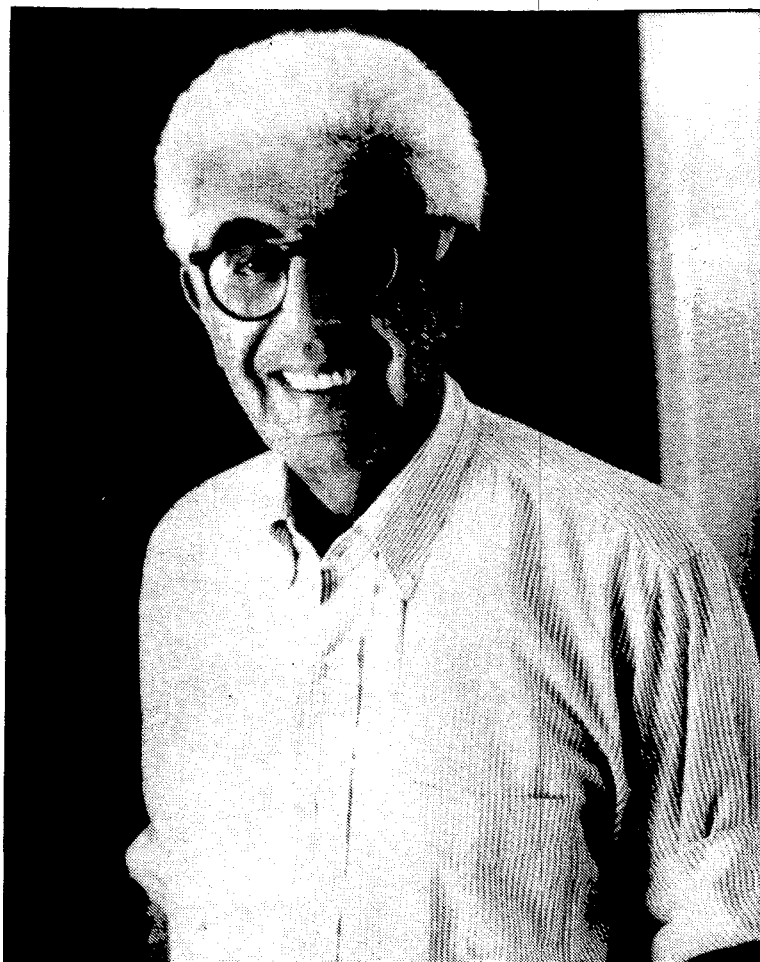
"It is important to remember," Commoner says, "that nearly every petrochemical product is a substitute for some pre-existing product made of natural materials such as wood, cotton or paper or of common materials such as metal and glass.... Unique, irreplaceable petrochemical products, such as pharmaceuticals or videotape, represent only a small fraction of the total output, so that substitution would sharply reduce the output of hazardous petrochemical products and the wastes generated by them."

The problem as Commoner sees it is not a choice between economic progress and environmental well-being—he does not think we need to freeze in the dark and eat grass to survive—but how to establish some social control over technology and how to substitute benign for malignant technologies.

Here again Commoner parts company with many environmentalists. For many ecologists, social change begins at home, the site of profligate and planet-threatening consumerism. Eating right and shopping right are typically seen as ways to change individual, corporate and even government behavior. Commoner disputes this assumption:

"Pogo's analysis of the environmental crisis—'We have met the enemy and he is us'—is appealing but untrue. It is true, of course, that the householder who discards nearly 200 pounds of plastic trash annually has struck a blow against the ecosphere. But often the householder has no choice; after all, milk is no longer sold in returnable glass bottles. Moreover, the decision to produce plastics ... was not made by the householder, nor does the householder benefit from the profits that motivate that decision. That power and that motivation reside with the corporate managers ... who order the assault—if unwittingly—on the ecosphere."

"It is popular these days to believe that if we all behave right we'll clean up the environment," Commoner told *In These Times*. "But we should distinguish between doing things that feel good and doing things that solve the problem. I don't wear synthetic clothes—I feel better wearing cotton and wool—but this choice isn't going to roll back the petrochemical industry." He concedes that "some consumer choice can bring about change" but argues that serious change will require "social as opposed to individual responsi-



Barry Commoner on the stump—for the planet.

Earth: making peace instead of just pieces

bility. The attempt to introduce some social governance of the means of production will require a political effort."

Third-party prospect: Commoner, who in 1980 ran for president in the Citizens' Party and has since been an adviser to Jesse Jackson, does not believe that environmentalists should conduct a third-party politics. Instead, "a serious effort should be made to turn the Democratic Party into a serious opposition party and push for power in that context. If the Democrats resist, then one might go a third-party route, but for the time it's important to continue working with the Democrats."

Just as Commoner's ideas about environmental regulation and movement Pogoism distinguish him from many environmentalists, his views on population have also been controversial. During the '70s, environmental organizers, urged on by Paul Ehrlich's wildly popular book *The Population Bomb*, considered population the principle environmental problem. It shaped movement thinking in the way the threat of global nuclear holocaust dominated peace movement thought, much as the greenhouse effect shapes environmental-movement thinking today.

Ehrlich blamed overpopulation for most environmental problems: "The causal chain of [environmental] deterioration is easily followed to its source. Too many cars, too many factories, too much detergent, too much pesticides ... too little

water, too much carbon dioxide—all can be traced easily to too many people."

Commoner took exception to what he regarded as Ehrlich's misguided Malthusianism. He argued that environmental degradation is

Serious change will require social, as opposed to individual, responsibility.

principally the product of technology, not population. This led to a rancorous debate that persists to this day.

In retrospect, Commoner's argument that technology was responsible for increased pollution is persuasive. After all, Third World babies were not the proximate cause of dioxin contamination at Love Canal or nuclear contamination at Chernobyl. The work of Frances Moore Lappé and the Food First organization tends to support his argument that hunger is more the result of inequitable distribution of food or the means to buy it than of "overpopulation." But some may be troubled by his assertion that "it's clear to most people that the overpopulation argument is really irrelevant."

Population problems: Commoner now blames colonialism for hunger and other population-related problems in the Third World. By

stealing resources from the Third World, colonialists blocked economic development, which prevented the populace from making the "demographic transition" to smaller families that greater prosperity brings.

"In the period 1800 to 1950," he says, "colonialism resulted in the development of an excess of 1 billion in

ENVIRONMENT

the world population." He says that "reparations" for ex-colonies now struggling with indebtedness, a program for the redistribution of wealth, and economic development based on renewable solar technologies and comprehensive recycling of non-renewable resources would comfortably sustain the 5 billion additional people that are expected to arrive before the world's population stabilizes.

But even if it were true that prosperity would enable Third World countries to make the demographic transition to smaller families, many Third World countries, such as China, regard population control as a necessary part of any development strategy. Population control is probably irrelevant in some local settings, as in Ethiopia, where war, not overpopulation, is to blame for starvation, but it is relevant in some settings. It's hard to imagine that Commoner would not agree, but he seems unwilling to do so.

Perhaps Commoner is too enthusiastic about the capacity of technology to solve environmental problems. Modernizationists have long argued that capitalist development would lead to prosperity and demographic transitions the world over. Likewise, socialists have argued that communism and social control over technology would result in economic development.

But they've both been wrong: centuries of capitalism have not transformed Peru or Ghana into prosperous countries, and decades of Communism have not created wealth and smaller families in Romania or Poland. Given this history, one has to be skeptical of Commoner's claim that "environmentally sound industrial development and growth," which he believes is possible if it is based on solar and recycling technologies, can succeed where capitalist and socialist technologies have failed.

Still, while Commoner's technological enthusiasm may get the better of him—what's missing perhaps is serious attention to what socialists call "the social relations of production" and, dare I add, consumption—his critique of neo-Malthusians, but also of government environmental regulation and movement Pogoism, deserve serious attention. ■

Robert Schaeffer is the author of *Warpaths: The Politics of Partition* and senior editor of *Greenpeace* magazine.

Street-smart Schulman stalks the New York state of mind

People in Trouble

By Sarah Schulman

E.P. Dutton, 228 pp., \$17.95

By Bruce Shapiro

TO SAY THAT SARAH SCHULMAN writes about New York is like saying that Anton Chekhov wrote about Russia. Her new novel, *People in Trouble*, is one of those rare contemporary fictions that insist on holding characters to account for the times in which they live. Three more-or-

FICTION

less comfortable middle-class New Yorkers—a middle-aged painter, the theatrical lighting designer who is her husband and a young woman who is her first extramarital lover—negotiate the spiritual streets of a Manhattan consumed by AIDS, homelessness and real-estate speculation. The novel charts their collisions—political, moral and sexual—and measures the response of each to the deadly crises around them.

People in Trouble is Schulman's fourth novel in six years, each set on the Lower East Side, each with a street-smart lesbian protagonist. And each with an unmistakably ironic eye for the texture of a suffocating, crotching city. It's a city upon which Schulman has spent too much love to consign to a post-industrial rubbish heap; her New York is a city where life-altering encounters still animate crumbling neighborhoods.

"I recognized that particular brand of dingy that's not at all the same as poor," says the anonymous narrator of *After Delores* (Dutton, 1988). "There was a special kind of neglect that felt like sabotage, and a lack of self-love evident everywhere. No mothers yelled to their kids from tenement windows. No music floated down from the lips of thin musicians in crowded apartments. No teenagers cut on the radio to dance and flirt in lots and hallways under the nostalgic eyes of old people in their ancient folding chairs. No. Too many junkies had taken over too much territory. When the sidewalk belongs to junkies, it lies cracked and bland. When there are people but no signs of life, the buildings that carry them sag with loss of expectation."

Can't cool down: Schulman's new novel owes its title to psychologist Wilhelm Reich's account of political violence in Vienna in the summer of 1927—a crucial moment in which paramilitary rightists fired their guns upon workers, in which Reich himself, despairing at the vacillation of liberal Social Democrats, turned to Communism.

No guns are fired in Schulman's *People in Trouble*. No Marxists offer

salvation to struggling workers. But it is nonetheless about a critical turning point for her city and her characters. "This summer had been different," one of them muses. "There had been a suffocating brutality that seemed brand new. It was the absolute lack of relief that put each person into a private state of wondering if it would ever get cool again."

Instead of Reich's fascists, a rapacious Trump-like developer named Ronald Horne is consuming every available square foot of real estate—and extending Manhattan out into New York Harbor when there's no real estate left to consume. The streets are full of homeless people; everywhere people are dying of AIDS. And a radical association of people with AIDS and their allies, "Justice"—modeled on ACT-UP—plots an uprising, turning the prevailing crisis into a momentary revolt.

It's these events with which artist Kate, her husband Peter and her lover Molly contend, all the while sorting out their domestic and sexual identities. For 20 years Kate and Peter have lived their lives convinced, as he says, that "our artwork is our political work," that "challenging form is more revolutionary than any political organization ever can be."

Kate's affair, her new obsession with cross-dressing, the deaths of gay friends—all bring her up short: "Love with political implications had always interested her from a distance, but there was this ever-present threat of violence accompanying it that she had managed, until now, to forget." Peter witnesses the deaths of theatrical colleagues but isn't sure how to mourn, let alone act; he resents the prevalence of gay culture around him. "I don't understand you," he says to Kate. "You don't think about anything unless it's gay.... Homosexuals don't have a monopoly on morality, you know."

Molly's dilemma: And Molly, no artist at all—she takes tickets at a seedy revival house—tries to reconcile the private passion she feels for

Sarah Schulman's *People in Trouble* is probably the first book—certainly the first good novel—to encompass the considerable significance of AIDS protests.

Kate with her unremitting sense of connection to the painful events around her. Finally, like the book's other characters, she must choose—between her sorrowfully but vitally engaged community and a lover for whom tragic events never become more than a staging area for her own ego. "I don't think you know how to love," Molly writes Kate. "You just know how to hold on to people. It's not the same thing."

People in Trouble may prove a bit problematic for some critics who praised *After Delores*. It's a sprawling story and the first of Schulman's novels told without benefit of a single, strong central protagonist. Instead, it's told alternately through the eyes of Peter, Molly and Kate. But part of her point is that people exist in relation to one another and the events around them. Schulman's earlier heroines were hardbitten loners; here, it's what happens between and among "people in trouble" that sets the tone.

Despite its underlying tragedy, *People in Trouble* is animated by Schulman's characteristically ruthless wit. A few blunt sentences convey paragraphs of trenchant social observation, as in her description of developer Horne's grand Midtown hotel, where wealthy white trash dines amid a colonial jungle motif: "The men's room didn't say 'Men' on the door. It said 'Bwana.'"

Life in the marketplace: And even more than in *After Delores*, Schulman stands here as a lyrically intent chronicler of her chosen corner of terrain, the Lower East Side. When historians a generation from now want to know what lower Manhattan was like at the outset of the '90s, they could do worse than use this novel as a Baedeker:

There was a huge black market on Second Avenue every night after eleven between Saint Mark's Place and Seventh Street. You could buy anything. There were people selling hot ten-speed bikes for fifteen. There were crates of brand-new tape recorders and cassettes and CDs with cellophane still around them. But there were also entire contents of various people's ripped-off homes that were pulled out and excreted on the sidewalk. You could buy half-used tubes of oil paint, half-eaten jars of peanut butter, plants, worn bedroom slippers and dirty towels. There were endless answering machines with messages still on them and endless leather jackets.

More than just a novelist's notebook jottings or attempts at atmosphere, these catalogues are a passionate attempt to preserve the face of a community under siege—under siege by real-estate developers from without, by disease and poverty and drugs from within. Schulman, like the historian of some latter-day War-



saw Ghetto, endeavors to record the details of this world before it vanishes.

People in Trouble is also probably the first book—certainly the first novel—to encompass the considerable significance of AIDS protests. In Schulman's New York, Justice, the ACT-UP-like organization, is somehow different from most of the familiar political groups that have marched across Manhattan's streets. Motivated by immediate life-and-death concerns, it is less about protest than about radical mutual aid. The members of Justice not only join rambunctious picket lines but organize funerals, pool their credit cards and pass around the latest information about AIDS drugs.

Justice, like its real-life counterpart, more closely resembles the old

immigrant mutual-aid societies—those clubs that taught European newcomers English, issued their own insurance, bought burial plots and lent the backbone to generations of strikes—than it does the straightforward, out-on-the-street political movements of recent decades.

It's to Schulman's credit that she offers so insightful a portrait. It's one of the many virtues that make this novel an achievement worth noting, by a writer whose steady gaze exposes the grim reality behind the bright lights and big city.

Bruce Shapiro, former editor of the *New Haven Independent*, is a contributor to *Building Bridges: the Emerging Grassroots Coalition of Labor and Community*, forthcoming from Monthly Review Press.

IN THESE TIMES MAY 2-8, 1990 21

Racism

Continued from page 24

man was so mad. I was speechless, but I motioned for the chicken-shit racist to come back. He stopped his car halfway up the street and threw it into reverse, I closed the door on the kids and continued to silently repeat the challenge. I thought, "How ironic. I'm a blue-eyed, blonde-haired Welsh-German about to take on a white supremacist who thinks I'm Jewish because of a corner synagogue."

Having been a college wrestler, I wasn't worried about any fair fight, but a rabbinical student had been gunned down in cold blood in the same neighborhood within recent memory. Suddenly I felt the nudge of my car door opening. Out reached Jesse's little hand presenting me with Duck's T-ball bat for reassurance. As I raised it in the night air, my approaching attacker switched gears and peeled away into the darkness.

"That's a Cal Ripkin bat, Daddy," offered Ducky.

"Nuh uh, it's a Darryl Strawberry."

Schlock radio: As I slowly patrolled homeward, imagining frightful "adult" scenarios if I happened upon a certain sportscar, I turned on the radio and caught some braggart right-wing talk-show host railing away at the black and Hispanic menace, decreeing *perestroika* a KGB plot to lower our guard, lamenting the liberals' so-called claim to the mythical peace dividend as socialist rubbish and proclaiming that unions were the next to go after the fall of communism.

I had to turn it off because its simplistic name-calling content was almost within the

kids' grasp—that's how low its messages were aimed, appealing to a seven-year-old's mentality. I seethed. I pictured this hate-monger as a small, mean-spirited, lonely man much like the miserly speculator who drove Jimmy Stewart to take the bridge in *It's a Wonderful Life*. I fantasized finding that sports-car vigilante and confiding to this jerk who has trouble picking his targets that the talk-show host was really a black Russian union organizer.

Dropping Jesse off at home, I had the rare opportunity to see his mom. Like so many in this neighborhood, she's a single head of

household working two part-time jobs while her ex-husband, after losing his mill job (as Jesse explained) "got some job down in Florida." She thanked me for taking Jesse to the circus, and I left as Jesse began bubbling embellishments of our "other" adventures.

This night has prompted me to think that perhaps the real problem of my community lies in the fact that we're so isolated from each other and ignorant of the real lives of the rest of the block. Maybe we need a dose of the "Russian family." Together, one night over someone's crowded kitchen table, maybe we should grapple with some impor-

tant question.

How do we who live in the non-affluent parts of town—where part-time service jobs and latch-key kids are the norm—how do we deal with our lot? Do we shoot blindly at shadows? And when demagogues preach to our kids that some people at the bottom have too much freedom, do we demand that those at the top with all the freedom in the world be held more accountable? ■

Larry Evans writes for the Service Employees International Union in Washington, D.C., and was editor of the now-defunct worker/writer journal *The Mill Hunk Herald*.

CALENDAR

Use the Calendar to announce conferences, lectures, films, events, etc. The cost is **\$25.00 for one insertion, \$35.00 for two insertions and \$15.00 for each additional insert**, for copy of 50 words or less (additional words are 50¢ each). Payment must accompany your announcement, and should be sent to the attention of **ITT Calendar**.

CHICAGO

May 4

32nd Annual Debs-Thomas-Harrington Dinner—honoring Arthur Loevy, secretary treasurer, Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union. Featured speaker, Cecil Roberts, vice president, United Mine Workers of America, AFL-CIO: "Victory over Pittston—Lessons for the Progressive and Labor Movements." At the Midland Hotel, 172 W. Adams, 6 p.m. Tickets \$35, \$60 with message in program book. Contact Chicago DSA, 1608 N. Milwaukee, Chicago, IL 60647, (312) 384-0327.

May 5

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KENT, OH

May 4

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NEW YORK

May 11-18

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opening); 6-10 p.m.; free.
SATURDAY, MAY 12—Nicholas Collins (concert); 8 p.m.; \$7.
SUNDAY, MAY 13—Current Events Brunch Forum; 11 a.m.; \$3.
MONDAY, MAY 14—Gerardo Renique; Peru: Drugs, Dirty War, and Revolution (second of three lectures); 8 p.m.; \$5.
WEDNESDAY, MAY 15—Anwar Shaikh; The Political Economy of the State in Capitalist Economies (second of two lectures); 8 p.m.; \$5.
THURSDAY, MAY 17—Brown vs. Board of Education Decision 1954; Paul Mankiewicz, Michael Hansen and Martha Herbert; Ecological Empowerment; Restoration of New York City; 6 p.m.; \$5.
FRIDAY, MAY 18—Laurie Stone; reading from her novel *Starting with Serge*; 7 p.m.; \$7.
All events take place at the New York Marxist School, 79 Leonard St., New York, NY 10011, (212) 941-0332.

WASHINGTON, DC

June 10

WILLIAM APPLEMAN WILLIAMS MEMORIAL COLLOQUIUM—Gar Alperovitz, Lloyd Gardner, Fred Harvey Harrington, Walter LaFeber, Saul Landau, Manning Marable, Thomas McCormick and others will speak in a day of remembrances of the radical scholar and former president of OAH who died this March. For more information and reservations, contact Laura Burstein at IPS, (202) 234-9382, x249.

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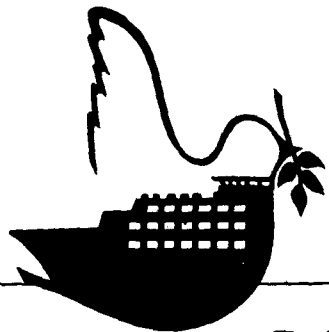
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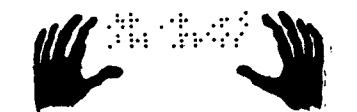
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By Larry Evans

DADDY, WHO WAS THE TALLEST PRESIDENT?" quizzed my seven-year-old, "Ducky," as I met him and his best chum Jesse exiting their cozy little neighborhood school at the end of another week. The school sits majestically atop a hill overlooking a rusted-out, closed-down factory that once was the town's main source of jobs. The only activity down at the plant now is its painful gradual cannibalization by cranes and bulldozers. What was formerly a proud working-class town now houses mostly immobile retirees and welfare families.

"Taft! They used to call him 'Too-Tall Taft' back when your grandma was a kid."

"No, dumb Daddy. Lincoln was the tallest," corrected Ducky.

"Nuh uh," chirped Jesse, "Ronald Reagan's taller."

"Maybe duller but not taller," I crackled.

"Nuh uh," repeated Jesse.

"My mom says Reagan was the sleepest," piped the Duck.

Curious lessons: We bantered like this through Cherry Tree, Log Cabin and other Presidents' Day triva gems until we found ourselves in front of Jesse's place. He reached down the front of his sweater and retrieved a string hung around his neck bearing his latchkey, uttered another signature "Nuh uh" to dispute one more of my crackpot answers and disappeared down the dank hallway of his crowded apartment building.

As we drove on, Ducky grew uncharacteristically quiet for a long moment, then looked up to me with a slightly mischievous, I-don't-know-if-I-should-say-this glance and said, "I know why black people are so pushy. When they were freed, they got too much freedom and too much for free and that's why." Then he gave me that look of self-satisfaction that he had just passed on something you don't learn in school.

I know his teachers well enough to know that the source of this street-dumb ditty wasn't the faculty. Nor might it have come from his regular babysitter, a black college student. Our friends and family run in progressive, educated circles, too hip to fall for such simplifications. And it rang out all too familiar to have originated in Ducky's neophyte cranium.

But that this thinking lurks somewhere in my integrated, lower-middle-class community disturbs me—especially during these miraculous times when the far reaches of the world are experiencing freedom in practically unlimited dosage.

"Don't shoot at shadows, Duck," I retorted. "It's one of the oldest mistakes in the world." I continued, to answer Duck's perplexed look, "Freedom's not the problem—it's usually the solution."

Just clowning: That night I hustled the two little barbarians off to the Moscow Circus, where we were to have the added treat of meeting an English-speaking clown from our town's "sister city" backstage after the show. We were commissioned by the local sister-city chairwoman to fetch him to a post-performance party. The three of us had fun trying to guess which clown might be

ours, the juggler, the acrobat, the guy that catches hats on his head

The modesty of the Soviet circus might have been a shock to the average American customer used to the glitz and hype of the Barnum variety. This was a simple one-ring affair of the highest possible artistry, where a hushed-toned ringmaster would simply whisper, "Attention please," to warn us of a particularly difficult attempt.

During the trapeze act, he matter-of-factly said, "Attention please, what you're

**Intolerance
rears its
ugly head
in the land of
family values:
a night at the circus and
a day with the racists.**



about to see has never been performed outside of the Moscow Circus." The understatement rankled some drunks balconied behind us, who, perhaps suffering withdrawal from the dirth of the usual hockey violence under this arena's dome, began a chorus of inanities like "Miss one for Gorbachov" and "Hit the ground for perestroika," breaking the respectful hush of the 10,000-plus audience anticipating the aerial feat.

As they kept it up and I was readying myself to go back there and negotiate with the rowdies, Jesse bounced up on his chair and bellowed, "Shut up!" in no uncertain terms. Duck and a half dozen other kids speckling the audience spontaneously did likewise. And the drunks shut up. Not another peep for the rest of the night.

Backstage to backstreets: We met our clown. He was the acrobat who could walk steps on his hands, and he was a big hit at the party, performing and conversing with his dozens of new friends. After listening to him gush over all the wonderful American advantages he hoped one day—soon!—his country would enjoy, I asked him what he could tell us of the Rus-

sian experience that we could use. He mimed a brain scan on this question, then answered seriously, "I'd give you our Russian family. I've seen many Americans so caught up in the hustle for success that they are maybe feeling lonely. In Russia, true, we are crowded into apartments with huge families—and we want more space!—but we've been through many hard times together and have taken care of each other. Our people are poor, but they are not lonely."

At 2 a.m., I was the last to leave the happy gathering. Duck had long since gone down for the Tyson, so I bundled his carcass up for the trek to the car. As I seat-belted Jesse into the back seat, headlights flashed on us and a speeding red sportscar screeched to a halt dangerously close to me.

"Kike!" "Dirty goddam Jew!" I whipped around to catch a glimpse of the young contorted white face as he snarled more insults while laying rubber, all the way up the street. A groggy Duck reached for my coat sleeve asking why the

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CHILD'S

PLAY

IN

SHADOW
LAND